000 to the remainder of the environment, and nature is systematically related to him; but whereas the plant, other animals, and minerals could, with certain modifications, continue their existence without him, the kangaroo obviously cannot live without them, and he must make an organized effort within himself to keep his organism alive and to reproduce his kind during what should be the normal span of his life. Murngin man occupies exactly the same position. He too has a North Australian environment that is both favorable and unfavorable. With parts of his physical surroundings his articulation is made with ease and without effort, but with other elements of nature he must struggle to adapt himself to them or to change them to his needs. Unlike the kangaroo, the way man changes himself or nature is largely cultural, and it is usually that part of his societal life called technology or material culture which is primarily and directly concerned.

Technology, from the functional point of view, is a many-armed and many-handed mechanism. The major element in it is man's attempt to force the materials of nature, formed into artifacts, to do the things his hands, feet, mouth, and teeth are unable to do without their help. When his effort is needed to force nature to be more hospitable, technology multiplies his two hands and arms into many hands and arms. It organizes his animal scratching, pulling, clawing, digging, chewing, biting and other physical activities into culturally ruled ways of manipulating nature by the creation of tools and of techniques for their manufacture and use. The Murngin material culture is comparatively simple, and a study of their implements offers an opportunity to examine some of the physical activities of a people who have been disciplined by technological behavior.

182 The making of any one article of culture is associated with every technical process in the whole of the material culture of the tribe. Material culture, in its turn, articulates with every other branch of culture, so that starting with such a small element in technology as the making of a spear-thrower one must ultimately consider the whole of the civilization.

A spear-thrower (mangel) is made by (1) cutting down with a stone axe a branch or small tree, (2) splitting it with a stone axe and scraping it with a bivalve shell, (3) carving it into correct shape, and hafting with (4) fiber, (5) string, and (6) resin.

(1) The mere act of cutting the tree down with a stone axe connects the spear-thrower with an elaborate stone technique and system of

trade. (2) Scraping with the bivalve shell connects the mangel with 182
the sexual division of labor, for women gather the shells, this not being considered man's work. (3) Hafting it with resin takes in the whole process of preparing the sap of a tree and forming it into a cement. (5) Hafting with fiber string brings in the process of using a digging stick to pull up the roots, breaking and cutting them up, soaking them in water and drying by a fire before a woman twists them into string. The spear-thrower presupposes a spear. If a stone spear is used once, then the spear-thrower connects with stone technique, with fiber string making, with the use of fire to straighten a shaft, etc.

All this could be carried much further, but it can be seen that not only are the various objects and processes of native material culture mutually dependent and intricately articulated, but also the materials with which these artifacts are made are connected into a unified system. The aborigine thus has, as one method (in addition to other methods) of classifying all objects of nature, the use to which those objects are put in the technology. Every native knows for what this tree or that stone is used. He usually thinks of them with such reference, or as elements in his ceremony and myth, or both.

2. *The Materials Selected from the Environment*

Murngin technology will be considered from three primary points 000
of view: (1) the materials selected from the natural environment, such as kinds of wood, stone, vegetable, and animal products utilized in forming the various objects made by the culture; (2) the aims and methods of the makers of the various artifacts; and (3) the objects themselves and their functions in the society.

Vegetable, mineral, and animal materials, in the order of their quan- 313
titative importance (foods not being under consideration), are used in making the various artifacts of the northeast Arnhem Land culture.

The vegetable material consists of many varieties. The trees of the mangrove jungles with their long, slender, light trunks are utilized in the manufacture of spear shafts; their peculiarly curved roots, lying on the top of the oozing mud along the tidal rivers, are used in the manufacture of boomerangs and in the formation of pick-like clubs. The eucalyptus forests contribute bark, sap, and wood, and the Melaleuca (paper bark) tree gives its bark and wood. Every kind of tree found in the environment is used for some purpose. Wood, bark, resin, sap, leaves and grass—all of these are formed into tools by which the native adapts himself to his natural and cultural environment.

314 small fire. It is used to haft wooden spear heads to their shafts, to articulate the peg of the spear-thrower to the shaft, and also to haft the feathers of some of the larger headdresses to a wooden or bone shaft.

Beeswax is used to join the stone spear head to the shaft, it serves
237 as the core for the various feather headdresses, it is used to make the
mouth of the wooden trumpet small enough to fit the lips, and at
times it is used as calking material for boats. It is also pushed into the
[304 hole always made in the septum to give the nose, for purely aesthetic
321] reasons, a very concave form. (If beeswax is not used, small rings are
made by wrapping two ends of cane together with fiber string and
inserting them in the hole made in the septum.) When not in use,
beeswax is molded into a flat mass and carried in a man's basket.

237 Human blood or the sap of an orchid bulb (djelkork) is used to
314 glue feathers and paint to the dancers' bodies for the various ceremonies, and to stick these same materials on their totemic emblems. When the bulb is used, it is chewed and the macerated end rubbed on the object to be decorated.

322 *Hafting.*—Wooden objects to be hafted together are always carved to fit nicely. Ironwood resin or beeswax is heated and applied to the parts, which are then fitted together and wrapped with fiber string.

III. Murngin Artifacts

000 In the last few pages we have briefly described the Murngin in relation to their natural environment, the kinds of materials they select from the environment, and the more general techniques used in fashioning their tools. In Appendix II, pages 471-505, we shall describe the various articles of the technology and their manufacture.

182 Murngin technology is forever subject to two fundamental changes: first, the constant movements from food ground to food ground, and, secondly and more radically, the exigencies of the alternate rainy and more favorable dry seasons. Both are essentially problems of environmental adaptation: the one involves the adjustment of man to his food supply rather than vice versa through an agricultural or pastoral economy; and the other is an adjustment to a semi-annual seasonal change which can best be stated in terms of fifty to sixty inches of rain during three or four months and none at all during the rest of the year. These adjustments have profoundly and fundamentally affected Murngin technology and, as we shall see later, their ritual and myth.

CHAPTER VI

WARFARE

WARFARE is one of the most important social activities of the Murngin 182
and surrounding tribes. Without it, Murngin society as it is now con- 628
stituted could not exist. Any social change consequent upon the loss of the trait would demand a decided alteration in the fundamental structures of the civilization. Warfare prevents modifications in the society that would possibly destroy it.

The tribe is not the war-making group in this society, nor is the 628
moiety. Warfare is as likely to occur within these groups as outside them. The clan, the largest social unit without internal armed conflict, is usually the war-making group. The causes leading to warfare are the killing of a clansman by a member of another clan, and interclan rivalry for women. The latter is the usual cause of a killing. Blood vengeance forces further killings. Clans within a moiety are more likely to be fighting, since clans of the opposite exogamic moieties are not in competition for women. An analysis of battles and killings shows this to be true in most cases, but there are a number of instances in which groups belonging to opposite moieties have been in conflict.

Feuds between clans of opposite moieties are more likely to die out for lack of the stimulus provided by competition for women. Such clans are likely to allow a makarata to be held, where blood is ceremonially shed as repayment for the death of a clansman, in order that the feud may be definitely ended.

It seems a probable hypothesis that one of the fundamental reasons 182
for the creation of a phratry is a drive within the civilization to create 615
social structures intermediate in size between moiety and clan, where open conflict would be taboo, as it is now within clan limits. This feel- 578
ing is not strong enough to counterbalance the open antagonisms resulting from the struggle for women. The clan structure is too solid and too powerful to yield any of its influence to a larger social institution.

As will be seen later, polygyny is possible under present conditions 628

628 only because of warfare, and, conversely, is a decided factor in stimulating open conflict because of the resultant scarcity of women.

The kinship system of the Murngin, with its attendant set of obligations, duties, rights and privileges stated sufficiently often before, tends to enlarge the scope of a two-clan feud to four or possibly all of the clans of the several tribes. The waku-gawel relationship, and also the dué-galle, mari-kutara, and marelker-gurrong relationships express a very strong solidarity; and a man can depend upon any one of these relatives, distributed in eight or more clans besides his own, to come to his assistance. An isolated killing, owing to the strength of the kinship structure, usually results in the whole of northeastern Arnhem Land becoming a battle ground at fairly frequent intervals.

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Kinship solidarity extends warfare but also has the opposite tendency: that of limiting its scope when it has reached very large proportions. All the clans are interrelated, and generally many will find their loyalties divided, for the kinship through marriage of certain members of a clan will dictate their helping one faction, while other members will be compelled by the laws of kinship to aid the other side. Since the solidarity of the clan prevents members fighting among themselves, those clans whose loyalties are divided usually try to pacify the warring ones. In a makarata, frequently arranged by them, they will usually be found doing all they can to have this peace-making ceremony end successfully.

Ceremony, Myth, and Warfare

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People who gather to celebrate the great totemic ceremonies, such as the Gunabibi, Djungguan, or Narra rites, come from clan territories sometimes hundreds of miles apart. The leaders for the Gunabibi ceremony, for instance, frequently come up through the interior from the headwaters of the Roper River in the south to the mouth of the Goyder. Members from all the tribes in the northern Arnhem Land district attend yearly. A ceremony assumes greater importance the larger the number of people present and the greater the distance they have come. A man always brags about how far he traveled, how many clans he visited on his pilgrimage to invite the various peoples to his circumcision, and how many people attended.

628 Warfare is in direct opposition to ceremony. It tends to destroy the larger group solidarity and ultimately to reduce the people who are at peace with each other to the clan unit, since only here is there absolute assurance that fighting cannot take place.

If armed conflict breaks out in a camp where a ceremony is being 628
celebrated, the ritual is usually stopped, either because the partici- 796
pants are afraid to stay, for they may be killed in their sleep, or
because the leaders of the ceremony become angry at what they consider 778
an insult to their totems.

It is believed that while a totemic emblem is in camp all fighting 778
should cease, and any infraction of the tribal law is considered a direct
insult to the totemic emblem and therefore to the clan. The leader of 626
a Narra ceremony, at which the totemic emblems are used, almost 578
always stops the ritual if there has been any serious infraction of tribal law, because he does not want to accept the consequences of an affront to his totem. It is believed that the totem itself would seek vengeance upon any leader who did not protect its interests at such a time. The writer saw two Narra, a Djungguan, and two Gunabibi ceremonies terminated because of the outbreak of fighting. The two Narra were stopped by the leaders because they said their totems were insulted, the Djungguan and Gunabibi because of the fighters' fear of death and also because of the anger of the leader of the ceremony.
Another Narra ceremony was not stopped when a fight followed the [684
catching of two women in adultery by their husbands. The women
were thoroughly beaten—less because of the offense itself than because 688]
it took place while a great ceremony was being held—and might have been killed but for their escape in the black of night by swimming to a nearby island.

The deliberate stopping of a ceremony demonstrates that warfare 628
and ceremony have clearly antithetical traits. The great ceremonies 796
tend to enlarge the group solidarity both in numbers and in extent
of territory and to create a smoothly functioning unit out of a large 182
number of clans, but warfare destroys this unity and reduces the limits of solidarity to the clan.

Since both traits are necessary to the tribe's social organization, a nice periodical balance has been struck; at one period ceremonialism controls the people's activities, and later war is uppermost in the relations of the local groups.

EFFECTS OF WARFARE ON POPULATION

A fairly accurate estimate places the population of this area around 162
three thousand. The genealogical material gathered by the writer shows about an equal number of women and men, with possibly slightly more men than women. This means that there are about fifteen hun-

162 dred men, more than half of whom have not reached the age of six-
teen. This leaves approximately seven hundred men who are looking
[595] for mates among the same number of women. The statistical average
of wives to one middle-aged man, is three and one-half. Part of the
discrepancy between the total numbers of married women and men is
accounted for by the fact that women are taken in marriage just before
they reach the age of puberty; although sexual intercourse is not in-
dulged in until after puberty, the women otherwise are treated as
[589] wives. A second factor in establishing the unequal ratio is that men
up to the age of twenty, and frequently to twenty-five, are without
wives or have only one wife; they must wait either for the action of
the levirate or for some of the younger females to mature. The two
factors just named as expressions of the disproportionate sexual ratio
in marriage do not account, however, for a sufficient number of
628 women to make up the difference. The killing of young men below
the age of twenty-five, because of the ever-present blood feuds, makes
165 up the balance.

The one important effect of warfare on Murngin society is the seasonal slaying of a small proportion of young men who have passed adolescence and are potential or eligible mates.

In the summary of men killed in battle the writer recorded about one hundred deaths in the last twenty years caused by war. These figures obviously do not include all of the deaths from this cause. There are none recorded for the people south of Caledon Bay and only a few for those around Wessel Island and the English Company Islands, where heavy fighting has always taken place. It would be safe, on the basis of population, to add another hundred deaths to the figure above, making a total of two hundred men killed. Since each man averages three and one-half women, these men would have appropriated seven hundred women of the available supply, or, in terms of the present situation, the tribes needed seven hundred women less than they would have, had the men lived.

628 Warfare, then, is one of the mechanisms on which polygyny is
182 based. If war were abolished, the percentage of men would increase,
[595] and the pressure on the social structure created by seeking mates
would probably be too strong for the present form of polygyny, with
its attendant mechanisms, the levirate and sororate, to survive. Since
these latter mechanisms do much toward strengthening the society and
preventing chaos attendant on the transfer of a woman from one clan
to another, it will be seen that warfare, while destroying one type of

solidarity (ceremonial), is partly responsible for the solid foundation 628
of the kinship structure in Murngin society. Warfare also helps to 182
prevent the breaking of tribal laws by the threat of retaliation from
other social groups. Finally, it acts as the ultimate police power in the
functioning of Murngin society. It is the threat of its force which
ultimately prevents flagrant breaking of tribal taboos.

Causes of War

Of seventy-two recorded battles of the last twenty years in which 628
members of Murngin factions were killed, fifty were for blood revenge
—the desire to avenge the killing of a relative, usually a clansman, by
members of another clan. Of these, fifteen were deliberate killings, [674]
against the tradition of what is fair cause for a war, and because it was
felt that the enemies had killed the wrong people. Ten killings were [684]
due to stealing or obtaining by illegal means a woman who belonged
to another clan. Five supposedly guilty magicians were killed by the [683]
clan members of victims of black magic. Five men were slain for looking [688]
at a totemic emblem under improper circumstances and thereby
insulting the owning clan and endangering the clan's spiritual strength.

The idea underlying most Murngin warfare is that the same injury 628
should be inflicted upon the enemy group that one's own group has
suffered. This accomplished, a clan feels satisfied; otherwise, there is 672
a constant compulsion toward vengeance, causing a continuous restlessness 681
among those who are out to "buy back" the killing of one of
their clansmen. The stealing of a woman provokes the same spirit,
since the group feels itself injured; and only the return of the woman
and a ceremonial fight, or the stealing of another woman, will satisfy
the hurt to its self-esteem, unless the clan has retaliated by killing or
wounding one of the enemy clansmen. The same feeling is instigated
by the improper viewing of the totem—an insult and an injury to the
entire clan.

Any of the above causes for war may be given deliberately or by
accident, but in either case warfare is a certain consequence. If a
young man chances upon an old man engaged in making a totemic
emblem, the former is killed; or if a man is accidentally killed in a
fight by a member of a friendly group, the dead man's people retaliate.
There is, nevertheless, considerable feeling that an accident should not [673]
cause open hostilities, but it has small influence upon the public
opinion of those who believe themselves injured.

There are a number of forms of ritualistic injury. If women look 688
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121 184 how they operate in the area of the southern shamans. From this we can possibly find out what generalized elements of the culture are organized into the social personality of the medicine man. As our analysis develops, it may be possible to determine whether ritual and magic are essentially different in their fundamentals. In the north therapeutic magic is a curative ritual; the two are one. The ritual used here is that of parts of the mourning ceremony belonging to the ordinary garma variety. This curing ritual may serve as a circumcision rite if the group needs a short ceremony to circumcise a boy before the wet season starts, for otherwise they will have to wait until the next dry season, running the chance of the boy's being too big for the operation.

121 182 The society goes through a prophylactic performance at its yearly totemic ritual;[1] at the death of a member there is a prophylactic ceremony in the mourning rite for the recently dead, which, in that aspect of its expression, is as much magical as it is religious, the purposes and social forces back of it being both. If the mourning ceremony were not held the soul would linger with the living, causing sickness and possible death. The leaf ceremony in the mourning rite chases the dead soul away. The various communions exclude the soul from the group, the entire mourning ceremony forcing it out of the society and into the totemic well. The sacred cannot remain with the profane: as Durkheim has pointed out, sacredness is contagious, hence dangerous (a lingering soul might make the living ill), and the two realms must be kept separate.

The medicine man who removes the hard object injected by a malignant mokoi, or the bone injected by an outraged totemic being or another sorcerer, is doing the same thing for the society and its individuals as the mourning rite. The magician too is performing a ritual which has no validity, since he has no position or power, unless the group sanctions it. The medicine man's social personality and the sources of his power are located within the group. The white magician is but the reverse of the coin on whose other surface appears the black sorcerer. The white magician through his personal mana helps the sick individual readjust himself to his social environment.

A prerequisite of social conditioning and adjustment is a normal organism, normal not only in biological fact but also in the values of the group. The normal human being not only among the savage Murngin but in any society, according to the evaluations of the

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[1] See Chapter IX, Murngin Totemism.

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group, is the "well" person. Sickness is felt by civilized man to be expectable but not normal, largely because sickness interferes with his ordinary participation in his culture. Both the savage and the civilized man consider sickness out of the ordinary, even though all organisms experience it, not only because of the lack of physical well-being but because the individual's daily social life is changed.

The effect of black magic is found only when the social personality of the victim is out of adjustment with its environment and fails to keep a satisfactory equilibrium. The victim is sick, he fails in the hunt or in fishing, he has his woman taken from him, he is wounded in a spear fight or falls from a tree, and, in general, he is not in a state of well-being. His physical energy is not sufficient to keep up the multiple activities of his social personality, he feels himself on the debit side, with his individual mana inadequate for adjustment; his social personality is dysphoric and maladjusted. Feeling the effects of black magic greatly resembles the condition of an obsessive psychotic individual in our Euro-American culture, since both the individual and his society recognize his inadequate adaptation. The extreme of this maladjustment is the person whose soul has been stolen—the ultimate in black magic. The soul, the sacred individualization of power and the epitome of the social participation of the organism, seems lost to the individual owner and is under the control of another, i. e., the human part of the man has been stolen and lost to him.

The white shaman functions as one who reestablishes the victim's social equilibrium. The society positively sanctions his actions by placing its belief in the magical and social mana under his control. The ceremonial leader in the north performs these same functions. Even here a man can be killed or made ill by magic: by black magicians, mokois, et cetera, who are outside the society, outside because magicians live to the south, and the mokois, the asocial trickster spirits, live outside the group in the jungles.

The ailing member of society in the northern area must also be cured and regain his vigor and feeling of power. There being no medicine man here, herbs are used, but the native considers them insufficient. In this area the curative technique is the well ritual—a "secret" thing caused the sickness and a sacred ritual is to remove it. The individual is placed in the well, sung over, ritually cleansed, and regarded as cured by the ceremonial leader in the clan exactly as the tribe is purified and sickness prevented by ritual, and exactly as the victim of magic is healed by the magical technique of the medicine man

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in the south and in the Murngin tribe country. In the north the ceremonial leader directs the healing ritual when the solidarity of the clan and the group is felt at its greatest strength. The whole of the social forces are focused on the individual through the totems, the totem well, and the attitudes and beliefs of the participants. The leader merely expresses, through his direction of the ritual, the social mana of the ritual in the group. This power is believed to go into the individual and remove his weakness. The leader functions here as in the Djungguan when he directs the ritual over the python totemic emblem to sing power into it, or at the blood-letting in this same ceremony when he places the power of the python spirit in the individual and his blood, which is to be used in the circumcision ritual. It is not the leader who has this power but the ritual of his group. The power and efficacy of the ritual come from the mana of the entire group, organized into a society of clans. The leader in the north, then cures by ritual and performs those functions carried out by the medicine man in the south. His activities are organized by his clan, he represents his church in the Durkheim sense, not only as a religious ritual leader but in the functions of a magician. In both cases, however, the clan is the "church" back of him. In the south the leader's powers are divided. The well ritual may still be used, but there is also here the white magician. His social personality is little different from that of another member of the clan; he differs only inasmuch as it is recognized that he has a special power. He is sought by the afflicted, however, exactly as a ceremonial leader in the Northern area is sought by the relatives of the dead or by the parents of a boy who is to be circumcised. The relatives of a sick man send for the shaman to cure and diagnose the illness of their ailing kinsman and either to restore him to his normal participation in the group or to pronounce his death sentence. *The medicine man then helps organize and direct the community's attitude toward the sick man.* He leads community attitude and organizes the community fundamentally as does the ceremonial leader. He examines his patient, says that he will die because his soul has been stolen, and the community at once recognizes that death is near. The society then organizes itself into a group which in effect excommunicates the patient, trying to force his soul into the realm of the dead and the sacred. If the magician diagnoses the case as curable and removes the cause, he reestablishes the individual's equilibrium, making him believe he can once more participate in his usual manner in the group. He can do this because he organizes group

attitude, since the belief in the curative power of this ritual unifies 121
the point of view of all the members. The magician, while healing, is 182
usually watched by a number of the near and far kinsmen. They all express great satisfaction in his removal of the sickness (the foreign object) and an affirmation of the victim's cure, as do the magician and the victim.

An Examination of the Social Configuration of Magic in the South 753

The Part Ritual Plays as a "Magical" Instrument in the South.— 196
Ritual can cause sickness and death as well as prevent them. When
the great ceremonies such as Gunabibi, Djungguan, Ulmark and 626
Narras are being performed, any breaking of the tribal laws is con- 834
sidered exceedingly dangerous and likely to cause sickness among the totemic group. If totems are hidden within the men's camp and a fight is started, or if illegal sexual relations occur, or if in some way the clan feels its totems have been profanely treated, there is general indignation and a certain amount of fear that members will become ill.

> A Narra ceremony was being celebrated by some clans of the Yiritja moiety and during the preliminary part a totem was being made when a fight broke out in the camp among some of the male members because a husband believed that his wife had been having illicit relations with another man. The owners of the totem felt not only that they and their totem had been insulted but also that they were likely to become ill from the fighting and the breaking of the tribal laws.
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> A shark totem was hidden by a member of the Djirin clan in a hollow tree on the edge of the men's ceremonial grounds. Some women from a distant group passed near it. The owner of the totem followed their tracks and accused their husbands of not watching their women carefully. While he stood with his clansmen back of him, all of them holding their spears in readiness for fighting, he said that it was an insult not only to him and his clan but also to his totemic emblem; that it meant sickness for him or that he might be speared in the next fight he got into.
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> Two men were caught in illicit sexual relations with two women not their wives while several totemic emblems were on the Narra ground. The Liagaomir clan had their great fire ranga ready for the Narra ceremony. When the leader of this clan heard what had happened he expressed great indignation. He said, "Let us take them down there to our Narra ground, those men and those women, and let us show them our ranga and then kill them. Let them see first what they have done." The women were severely beaten by everybody including their brothers and sisters. The

Marndiella

852 773 The Marndiella symbolism, like the ceremony itself, is unelaborated. The first section is concerned merely with preparing the boys by ceremonially dressing them like women for the important reason of identifying them with the women's social group. The bloodletting of Section B (found in full detail in the corresponding section of the Djungguan) ritualizes the profanation of the pool and the swallowing of the women by the snake. The flying-fox motif of the spiritually dead brought to life by the ritual is indirectly referred to.

The women's mat dance (Section C) identifies the initiate with the two Wawilak women, and covering him with the ainmara (woman's mat) symbolizes his place in the age grading. In this section we also find the snake swallowing the women.

The dog dance of Section D is one of the most difficult to interpret fully. The dog smelling the initiates means they are "all the same as animals and he is going to catch them." (Dog is best understood in the several myths in which he becomes a symbol of black men generally and therefore of the male group.) The significant fact here is that the boys are symbolical of ritually unclean food.

The blood-smeared, torch-bearing line of men of the fifth section, E, are snakes, and dance around the Wawilak women to symbolize swallowing them. In the last section, F, the initiates are circumcised and steamed exactly as in the Djungguan, and the same symbolism holds here.

852 884 The analyses of the four ceremonies show that in addition to the fundamental snake-swallowing-the-women symbol, the Gunabibi brings in also the reproductive cycle and seeing-and-naming-the-food-animals symbols. The Ulmark adds the animals-running-away-from-the-unclean-women symbol. The concluding segments of the Marndiella, Djungguan, and Ulmark bring in a communion, as does the Gunabibi in the flying-fox episode; the communion in the first three seems fairly separate from the general myth-symbols, but in the Gunabibi is part of the snake ideology.

182 *Summary of the Ritual Logics of the Wawilak Configuration*[1]

If we let

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884 M stand for myth

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773 [1] This same procedure could be followed for the other sections and subsections of the myth, including the women naming the animals and the coming from the south, also the animals running away from the women.

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B for the section of the myth in which the python swallows the women
C for ceremony
D for Djungguan
G for Gunabibi
U for Ulmark
M for Marndiella

and allow lower-case letters corresponding with upper-case letters of the sections to stand for those sections, we can say

$$M_B = C_D(a \ldots g), C_G(a \ldots e, g \ldots i), C_U(b \ldots i, p \ldots t), C_M(c, e \ldots f).$$

The ideology of the first section of the Wawilak myth (M_A)—the coming of the two sisters from the southern interior and the flight of the food animals—although latent in a great number of the sections, appears explicitly only in G(c), G(e, f) and in U(a, c, i, m, o, p). Omission of symbolical relation of certain sections to the myth is due to lack of material.

Obviously the testimony of the natives itself has manifest in its content a great amount of interpretative material which most emphatically demonstrates that the Wawilak myth is no meaningless tale concerned with a purely mythological history of the aboriginal peoples of the area; and this evidence again proves that the dances performed have a deeper significance to the natives' own consciousness than mere aesthetic expressions or religious formulae. All four of the rituals definitely are related to the fundamental Wawilak myth and have their symbolic point of reference there. Each of the dance and song elements refers to a myth-symbol found within the Wawilak dramatic story. The Wawilak myth-rituals are, speaking generally, sacred dramas in which the mysteries of life are enacted. The same is true for the Djunkgao myths and Narra rituals; but rather than confuse our thinking by dealing with too many variables at one time, we shall postpone our interpretation of the Narra rituals until we deal further with the Wawilak story. Since the Djungguan, Gunabibi, Ulmark and Marndiella are the most important rituals, and since in them the one symbol of the snake-swallowing-the-women seems to dominate all the others, the core of our problem of meaning lies here, and we shall give it our first attention.

in the general topography of northeastern Arnhem Land. The clan 773
structure is not a mere exogamic group which occupies a certain ex- 614
tended territory and whose people earn their living from this area. In the first place, all its female members are usually not attached to the land itself, for after reaching early adolescence they go as wives and potential mothers to other clans than their own; the wives and mothers of the local clan come from other areas and are therefore not thought of as belonging to this particular piece of land. Spatial unity is disrupted and the Murngin clan is seen to be an entirely different social entity from our modern state. Further, the economic unit of this people is not the clan but the horde.

The horde's membership is composed of men from a number of 621
clans as well as of women from different groups. The clan composition
of a horde becomes more heterogeneous during the dry season when 614
an area can support a larger number of people, than in the rainy 423
season when food is scarce. The male membership of the clan is seldom spatially intact except during the ritual season when all of the male members are more likely to be present than in the rainy period. The clan's so-called "ownership" of the land has little of the economic about it. Friendly peoples wander over the food areas of others and, if their area happens to be poor in food production, possibly spend more of their lives on the territory of other clans than on their own. Exclusive use of the group's territory by the group is not a part of the Murngin idea of land "ownership." The ownership of the land is more in the "nature of things," as seen by the Murngin. The land is not outside the clan but is an integral part of it. As has been said, it cannot be taken from the clan, for it is of the clan and made such by the order of existence. "Wongar made it that way and that's why we have these things today."

Politically the clan is almost impotent when it comes to positive 614
action. It is impossible to obtain group action, even for the wergild,
which will function to the extent that discipline can be enforced and 622
individual action prohibited in a blood feud. The ceremonial leader is considered head man, and if physically able and of sufficient talent, he is also war leader, but his power is at an absolute minimum except as a ritual leader; it is in the field of ritual and not of government that he exercises his leadership.

The names of the country, the names of the wells, and the list of 103
totems as well as the names of the mythological ancestors all form 614
fundamental parts of the clan unity. All of the names of the clan 773
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103 wells, both the sacred and the camp names, refer to the totemic objects
614 either directly or indirectly and usually describe some aspect of the
clan's country or rationalize its relation to the totem. The totemic
773 mythological ancestors generally have the same names as the well.
182 All of these elements are unified by one or more myths. These
778 myths in turn are dramatized by the various rituals enacted by the
clanspeople so that when a man is asked what totems a particular clan
possesses, he ordinarily thinks of the rituals they use and the myths
the rituals portray.

The names of the clan wells either elaborate the detail of the myth as it is expressed by the totem or they give distinct additions which relate other totemic myths to the well. In no case does the name of a well have no relation to the totems of the clan.

The clansmen are identified with the totemic well by the fact that
614 they come from it and are allowed to be born by the action of the
778 totemic spirit that resides within the well; they are identified with the
182 well because at death they will go back to it and because all of their
kin who have died and those living, with whom they have had all of their social relations, are or will be either in this well into which their own soul returns or in other like clan wells; and finally, their well-being and that of their fellow clansmen and of other clans are dependent upon the proper enactment of the seasonal rituals which demonstrate the mana or power of the totem. At death not only does the soul go into the well but it also enters into the totemic emblem itself and becomes a part of it.

551 The names of the living are all taken from some part of the totemic
complex and refer directly or indirectly to the totem. One exception
182 to this is the new group of Malay terms which, however, have been
771 sacralized by the real ancestors' possessing them, and which, after a
period of taboo and when the ancestors are within the totemic water
holes are passed on to the living. Another exception to the rule is the
group of nicknames, which are also inheritable by the living from
the dead. The spiritual life of a Murngin, then, is entirely made up
771 from totemic elements, and his whole participation within that part
182 of the community which makes him a social man and separates him
from the adolescent children and women is within the totemic complex itself. (This of course is a fundamental aspect of age grading and is treated under that head.) As a male social personality, a man is part of the totem, and in all his social relations with the male part

of his group he is identified with the totem. This is true for all other 771 individuals in his adult age grade, so that the totality of the males' 182 individual relations forms the whole of the totemic behavior. It is the sacred tradition of the clan groups, as held in the minds of the individuals of the adult male age grade—plus ritualistic behavior as overt demonstrations of these traditional beliefs held and possessed by the male group—which forms the totemic configuration. The group in this sense does unconsciously worship itself. The totem well and the totemic emblem, being concrete symbols of the totality of the sacred traditions, become symbols of group unity and symbolize the group; and to the extent that the ritual sanctions hold and force subordination of all behavior to their end, the sacred dominates and controls the ordinary life of the individuals within the clans, and therefore of the social life of the clans themselves. The Murngin, when asked why this is so or that exists, always reply, "Wongar did it this way," "Those two old women made it that way," or, "Such and such a totem did so and so in those Wongar times." If their associations are allowed to proceed to deeper levels of explanation, various fundamental myths make their appearance within the thinking, and it soon becomes clear that the categories to which the speakers refer their ideas and the things of the world in their ultimate meanings are these myths. The possession of all land is made absolute and final to the Murngin by the statements of the myth which describe certain behavior of the totems which took place on that land, and which identify the clan and the land as one because the clan has certain totems. The clan's totemic ancestors have certain totemic names, its children arrive by relations with certain totems, it possesses and practices certain rituals, and its dead go to certain totemically named wells. The Murngin clan itself, then, is a membership of a certain unilateral group of people whose unity is expressed by the possession of a totemic configuration and the practice of exogamy.

The mana of the Murngin well is due not to any mundane biological 778 value its water may have for the group, but rather to the spiritual power of the water. If the water had physiologic value alone, then all the water holes would be placed in the same category by the Murngin. As it is, certain wells are considered sacred, and certain others ordinary and placed in a natural category. The spiritual elements in the sacred well include the totem and totemic ancestors as well as the souls of the dead and those who are to be born. The Narra well also

178 acts as a repository for the totemic emblems after the Narra ceremonies.

The clan well as an organizing idea can be used in ritual and myth, but it has not the flexibility and ease of manipulation held by a small totemic object. The totemic emblem can be used in a ceremony as a concrete expression of the ideas of the sacred. It becomes a tangible expression of python, barrimundi, or some other totemic spirit. The infinite variety of ideas and feelings which are a part of the beliefs making up the totemic spirit can be symbolized and expressed in the concrete image of the totem, and this object can be manipulated in the rituals. The ritual handling of the totemic image can and does express, through a series of totemic dances, the various attitudes of awe, respect, and supplication, as well as the fundamental social ideas and myth-symbols which are a part of the totemic configuration. The neophyte holds his head down, the old men tell him of the respect and care with which he must treat the emblem, and how he must live his life under the code of Murngin morals after seeing this sacred totem. The totemic trumpet is blown over the initiates, and the myth-symbol of the great python swallowing the women is expressed; a man dances with an emblem in the Narra ground, and a certain myth of his clan is symbolically expressed; a man cuts his arm and while the blood pours from it the python trumpet is blown over him, and the profanement of the python pool with all its complex social ramifications and subtle implications of value and sanctions is expressed symbolically and simply because this concrete trumpet-emblem (imbued with totemic mana by the agency of the totemic design and totemic ritual and song) can be handled and moved and seen and heard.

196 The great rituals like the Gunabibi and Ulmark, which bring together, from widely separated clans and tribes, people who often
182 have old scores unsettled and are ready to burst into open conflict, function as organizing units of these people during the period of the ritual, and also after they separate, for, with the aid of the myth, the rituals leave in the minds of the natives a feeling of oneness, of relationship to the larger group. The peoples who attend the ceremony organize themselves spatially in accordance with their location in the horde—that is, they camp in the same direction and relative distance with respect to the host clan. For example, if the Warumeri gave a Narra, the Kalpu of the English Company Islands would be north of them, the Kalpa still farther north, the Liagaomir would be west, and so on. The subsection (see Chapter III on Kinship) enters

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into certain ceremonies such as the Djungguan to regulate the ritual behavior.

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The ritual sanction of offending the ancestors and totems by starting a fight prevents many feuds from breaking into open conflict. This sanction or a similar one is absolutely necessary to allow the ritual to remain an interclan and tribal affair. If the sanction and its attendant action were not fully established, the disintegrating effect of the clan solidarities and their associated antagonism to outside groups, organized by the blood feuds, would destroy the participation of a large number of groups and reduce the people who would participate in any one ritual to a residue composed only of clans and peoples closely connected by marriage. At times the blood-feud feeling is so intense that a ceremony is broken up, or the ceremony is not attended by the warring groups.

The rituals provide the only effective mechanisms which enlarge the social horizon of any individual or clan beyond his or its immediate neighbors. The kinship system with its asymmetrical marriage arrangements constantly pushes out into the larger culture and tends to increase the clan's participation in wider groupings; but in the face of the blood feud, organized on the basic unity of the clan and its intermarrying groups, this larger integration of the society on the basis of the kinship alone is impossible. Old rivalries for women are remembered and several generations of killings are not forgotten, which means that even though a man calls a somewhat distant tribesman "older brother" and is termed "younger brother" by him, the concepts of cooperation and solidarity that lie within these terms have no effect in restraining killings or the blood feud, since the feelings of loyalty to the local group and the near kin, as expressed in antagonism to outsiders, prevent an extension of the kinship system to others.

It is the larger rituals, then, with their most powerful religious totemic sanctions which do operate to restrain the local loyalties and seasonally allow a larger participation in the group. In certain instances they further tend to lessen the intensity of the dislikes of the conflicting groups following the dispersion of the larger groups. It must be remembered, however, that the mere bringing together of very large groups, as for example in the Gunabibi (to which people come from great distances), tends to create situations which may lead to battles after the ceremonies are over; but ordinarily a peacemaking duel follows the ceremony which is supposed to settle old fights and lead to a general friendliness.

Masculinity and Femininity as Organizing Principles of the Social Organization as Expressed in the Rituals

562 182 831 In addition to isolating the symbols of the snake as the rainy season and the snake as the men's age-grading group, we can separate out a further symbol which permeates all their thinking and underlies their elaborate organization and social structure. Masculinity is inextricably interwoven with ritual cleanliness, and femininity is equally entwined with the concept of uncleanliness, the former being the sacred principle and the latter the profane. This sexual dichotomy and its correlation with the Murngin beliefs of what are the sacred and profane elements of the group, are again connected with a further principle of human relations, namely, that of superordination and subordination.

562 182 626 171 The superordinate male group, made sacred through the ritual initiation of its individual members into the sacred group, and maintained as a unit by continual participation in the rituals, subordinates the female group which is unified by virtue of exclusion from the ceremonies and of ritual uncleanliness. The superordination of the male is made a mystery by the nexus of masculinity, sacredness, and the seasonal reproductive cycle. Within this mystery lies one of the strongest and most effective sanctions found in Murngin society. The male sacredness becomes more sacrosanct and "holy" as it progresses into the graded deeper mysteries through the age-graded initiations, and this sacredness controls the profane and less sacred elements of society by the invocation of the direct negative sanctions of ritual: "If you young men do not do this, such and such will happen to you." "This man married wrong or that woman has had illegal sexual relations, and our whole group is endangered ["made sick"]." Obviously it behooves everyone to live up to the code of the society; and if he does not, the whole group feels compelled to act to prevent the contagion of his harmful actions causing a general catastrophe. The ceremonial mysteries of the male group, then, help subordinate not only the women and younger boys but also the men themselves, since they too cannot profane the sacred mysteries by some impure and illegal act; if they do, the male group feels obliged to act. In other words, in the local organization of the whole social group from the pinnacle of the old men's age grade to the bottom age grade of women and children, and from the most remote northeastern clan of Wessel Island to the most southeastern one in the far interior, there is a general subordination of the several institutions of the social organization

to the higher sacred realm which constitutes the Murngin system of 562
totemism. It is in the ultimate sanctions of the totemic system that 182 ●
Murngin society finds its final unity. The general technology, which 626
is the community's practical adaptation to its natural environment,
is disciplined and organized through the instrumentation of social 771
organization. For example, the rules of conduct for various kin personalities, such as gawel and waku, or father and son, regulate the distribution and consumption of the social goods produced by the technology; or, to take another example, the rules of clan membership demand certain divisions of foods, other creature necessities, and services. These and the other laws of the social organization not only discipline the economic life but also relate the individual members and the institutions of the community to each other.

The totemic system provides, first, a final set of absolute sanctions 771
for the society which places a pressure on all the members to perform 182
the acts dictated by the rules of the social organization; and, second, a set of concepts organized into a unified system which provides a mechanism for group integration. The totemic emblem is a concrete symbol of these two basic concepts, and an object which can be manipulated by a series of rituals (primarily the Narra), which elaborate, dramatize, and tie together the various sacred concepts of the myths in the sacred dances and songs. The latent content of these rituals is the myth, and within the myth are the fundamental symbols of the social concepts of totemism. These were the symbols which we analyzed and for which we gave the native interpretation in Chapters IX and X and summarized in the beginning of this chapter. In the present chapter we also presented some of the concepts which underlie the oral rite and dramatic ritual. We found that there is a general idea which surrounds natural phenomena, and that nature is seen as a unity, as an alternation of the dry and rainy season (that is, in the myth the seasonal alternation is symbolized by the conflict of the snake and the two women). The natural phenomena are all organized in this dichotomy. We saw that the seasonal variations are given social categories by the identification of the rainy season with the male principle and the dry period with the female principle. This classification is mechanically accomplished in Murngin thinking by giving the seasons and the age-grade dichotomy the same symbols. The relation of the social category to the natural one is implicit in the myth's account of the wronging of the two women by the ancestors of man

771 and the profanation of the sacred pool. The general activity of nature, •182 that is, the alternation of the seasons, is the effect of man's uncleanliness in the mythologic past and in the present, as the Djunkgao interpretations will later demonstrate. It is therefore necessary continually to cleanse the group and its individuals of all social uncleanliness. This is the function of the Narra rites and of the Garma, Marndiella, Djungguan, Gunabibi, and Ulmark.

That which organizes the two categories (the seasonal reproductive cycle of nature and the male-cleanliness female-impurity dichotomy of society) into one is the totemic symbol which can be manipulated by ritual and gives man an effective control over nature and an effective negative sanction over the members of his society. The rituals must be properly conducted yearly to keep the group and its individuals ritually clean; and in these rituals the manipulation of the sacred totem insures the proper function of the seasons, a sufficient production of food, and a continuation of the natural surroundings proper for man. Thus that which is beyond man's technology or beyond his real powers of control becomes capable of manipulation because its symbols can be controlled and manipulated by the extraordinary powers of man's rituals. At the same time the identification, in the totemic concept, of the male and female principles with the seasonal cycles gives the adult men's group the necessary power to enforce its sanctions; the providing world of nature will not function if the rules of society are flouted and man's uncleanliness contaminates nature. Hence everyone must obey. If he does not by his own volition, then he must be forced to, by restriction of his larger participation in the group (as, for example, barring him from higher age grades until he behaves himself); or by the direct sanction of clan feud; or, within the clan, by allowing the offending member to be killed by another clan. As we have said, the women's sociological group and women as physiological beings are thus subordinate to the men's group, and the Murngin age-grading system has been built on this principle. Like other Australian tribes, this peoples' "political" control might be termed a gerontocracy, but it is more than merely the rule of old men.

182 773 852 The analysis of the four myths shows that, besides the fundamental snake-swallowing-the-women symbol, the Gunabibi uses the reproductive cycle, and the Ulmark the animals-running-away-from-the-unclean-women as important motifs. The concluding acts of the Marn-

diella, Djungguan and Ulmark introduce communion rites, as does the Gunabibi, in the flying fox episode. The communion in all of the rituals except the Gunabibi seems fairly differentiated from the general symbols, but in the Gunabibi it is part of the snake idea (the initiate becomes part of the snake in the dance). 182 773 852

The animals-running-away-from-the-women myth-symbol given primary expression in a number of the Ulmark segments is also of secondary interest in the Djungguan and Gunabibi. The interpretation of the snake-swallowing-the-women symbol gives a sufficient understanding of the Wawilak myth to fit the animals-running-away symbol into its place. The animals leave the women and jump into the python's pool because the women are ritually impure. They arise from the pool and roar like snakes. The animals here are symbolically taken into the snake's totem well and made clean by their immersion, which is demonstrated by their roaring and acting like the snake. Further, they are being swallowed by the wet season. In the Gunabibi also the animals are running away from the women and are being made clean in the well. In the Ulmark the rainy season theme is made more explicit by having the men remove all their ornaments and clothing and shave to resemble men emaciated from lack of food. This occurs in the first section after the animals (kangaroos) have run away. It seems a possible hypothesis that the Djunkgao loss of the totems and the Wawilak loss of the animals are analogous and to the native mind, in general, the same thing. This was not told to me specifically of Murngin dogma by the native interpreters, but was often said generally about the Wawilak and Djunkgao myths and the behavior of the two sets of sisters.

The Gunabibi directly introduces the further theme of the reproductive cycle. In the Djungguan, Marndiella, and Ulmark it is subsumed under the general seasonal cycle, but in the Gunabibi it has a definite part of its own in the symbolization; and when the reproductive cycle does find expression in the song and dance symbols the seasonal cycle is understood to lie within it as a part of the process of reproduction. It can be said that part of the fundamental structure of the Gunabibi is the expression of reproductive activities in symbolical detail. First only the male animals dance, then only the females, then the two simulate copulation; and when the human species perform, they actually copulate ceremonially. The ceremonial aspect of copulation is emphasized by the exchange of tribal brothers' 182 773 852 831

182 wives; repetition of ordinary profane sexual relations of spouses would
773 lack the dramatic force of the copulation of strange mates.

852 (Incidentally, the fact that the copulation of animals is simulated
831 by male dancers and that the human symbols of reproduction actually copulate demonstrates once more how the rituals symbolically manipulate functions of nature which cannot be directly controlled, whereas the direct form of expression is exercised when possible.)

The reproductive symbol is related point by point to the seasonal symbol by the knowledge of the seasons when the animals go about not paired, but singly, and the time of year mating and reproduction take place. The reproductive cycle of mating and birth is manifest in most of the sections of the four Wawilak ceremonies, is explicitly stated in the Gunabibi symbolism, and is latent in the concept of the season's fluctuation. The emphasis of interest in natural phenomena is shifted slightly from the seasonal variation as the organizing principle of all nature's complexities to the reproductive behavior of the animals and plants, which again generalizes on all the activities of nature. In brief, the concepts of the reproductive cycle and seasonal alternation state the same generalization and are given the same symbols in the myth.

The Gunabibi, by bringing the reproductive cycle into explicit symbolical statement in a number of segments, by retaining in others the usual seasonal symbols, and by combining seasonal and reproductive symbols in still others, gives us a better understanding of the Murngin concepts of the order of natural phenomena. The fertility of the plant and animal species is seen to be in a time relationship, and this order of time is conceived as a seasonal one. This gives us a more elaborate knowledge of the general thinking which underlies the two sister myths and Murngin totemism in general. Furthermore, the Gunabibi ritual completely demonstrates the fact that the Murngin realize the necessity of sexual intercourse as part of the reproductive cycle.

182 When the Liaalaomir python says, "I see we talk a different lan-
852 guage—it is better then that we all have the same ceremonies together
for we own the same maraiin," he is stating a fundamental fact of the
773 Murngin social structure. What he is saying is that the clans ("different languages") tend to break down the larger unity with their open or suppressed antagonisms, and the ceremonies and totems tend to establish unity through the underlying agency of the rituals and myths in which Yurlunggur appears.

Comparison of the Wawilak and Djunkgao Constellations

The western Wawilak myth tells of the wanderings from the south 773
of the two Wongar sisters who name the animals, localities, and wells
of the individual clans, as well as the countries, in their progress north- 182
ward. In the eastern Djunkgao myth two sisters do exactly the same 796
things except that they travel by water and by land. The Wawilak sisters break the fundamental rule of clan exogamy by committing incest with one of their own clansmen. The Djunkgao sisters do the same thing. The only difference in this part of the two myths is that the Wawilak adds the menstruation uncleanliness to the incest impurity. In the third and final element of both myths the ritual paraphernalia and mysteries are obtained by the men from the women and the latter admit their subordination: the Wawilak women tell the men how to conduct their rituals and give them up to the men; the Djunkgao lose their totems and therefore their rituals are stolen by the men. These two myths with their essential identity of plot have superficially elaborated their rituals into quite different patterns; fundamentally they are the same. The Narra rituals focus their attention on the individual clan wells, on their clan totems, and on the process of purifying the clan of its uncleanliness. The Wawilak rituals place their emphasis on the totems of one well, although the other wells are brought in by inference (all the snakes in the myth hold a conversation in the sky). The Wawilak rituals emphasize the ceremonial uncleanliness and the final purification of the group but with a different set of symbols from those of the Djunkgao rituals. The Narra ceremony repeats and thereby emphasizes uncleanliness and purification. The Wawilak rituals accent purification by the snake's swallowing the women, but rather explicitly symbolize profanement as a separate element in the Dua Narra kingfisher and spear dances, the center of this ritual.

This identification of the two myths and the fundamental sameness 773
of the two rituals help us to obtain a deeper insight into the concepts 182
of the Djunkgao than we could obtain if we had only the Narra
rituals to analyze. The two sisters by their incestuous act lose the 783
totems to man. This incestuous act also causes the cycle of the seasons 796
and of reproduction. The symbol of this uncleanliness is the semen of their incestuous partners, and their purification consists of washing this impurity off their bodies. The Murngin people reenact symbolically the mythological cleansing in the ritual of the community baptism. The water cleanses them as it does in the symbol of the snake (water)

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773 swallowing the women in the Wawilak myth. The bathers in the
Djunkgao rite must cover themselves entirely just as the Wawilak
● 182 women were covered by the snake (water) in the western myth.
783 After this the males are sufficiently clean to eat their ritual bread
ceremonially.

In the Narra there is less definition of the various symbols than in
773 the Wawilak group of rituals, and in the Yiritja Narra even less than
796 in the Dua. In the Yiritja Narra the great floods bring the totems; the dances are basically the same as in the Dua, where there is the dance with the totems on the men's ground, the calling out of the entire list of clans of the moiety, the dancing in the ring, the use of spears, the ceremonial bathing, the later showing of totems, and the eating of communion bread. In the Yiritja there is no deviation from the fundamental pattern of the Dua Narra, but the mythology is explicitly attached to the ritual by making the foam (semen in the Dua ritual) land in the Yiritja ritual; and it is only by inference that the whole of the Yiritja Narra is seen to depend on the interpretation of the Dua Djunkgao ritual for its meaning; e.g., the ascendency of men over the women is demonstrated by calling out the names of the wells each night, which symbolizes the removal of the totems from the women.

796 Basically the totemic Ņarra ceremonies are, first, purification rites by which the whole group is "baptized" (and it is this element which is most emphatically accented); second, expressions of group solidarity in communal eating of purified totemic bread by the purified group; third, rites emphasizing both clan structure and rigid dual division (by showing clan totems and calling out names of clan wells, and by the division of the Ņarra ceremony into two—Dua and Yeritja—rituals when in reality it is but one). Of all the rituals involved in the high totemic ceremonies, the Yiritja Narra is the simplest and least elaborated in its expression and the Gunabibi and Ulmark the most proliferated and explicit.

773 The individual totems found in all the wells supposedly visited by
778 Wawilak and Djunkgao women are all pieces of the general mosaic of the myth. For example, in the Liaalaomir where the Wawilak women visited there are the following totems: carpet snake's head, carpet snake's anus, caterpillar, carpet snake, carpet snake's neck, carpet snake's tongue (this is also lightning), an iguana, green ant, singing stick, a palm tree, ridgepole of a house, house rafters, uprights, forked stick used for house construction, sea gull, wood brought in on the

category, and when man "keeps from being sick" he at the same time 773
keeps nature from being sick. The rituals keep both man and nature 796
well and strong and allow them to reproduce and the fertility cycle of 783
both to continue.

An Analysis of the Ritual Logic of Murngin Totemism

We have now finally reached the point where we can analyze Murngin religious thought, for we have presented in detail, first, the relations of the myths to the rituals; second, the symbolization of the phenomena of nature in myth and ritual; and third, the symbolization of the social organization and its various segments in Murngin ritual. The articulation of these very complex elements of society and nature into a conceptual configuration which is Murngin totemic logic cannot be presented coherently by description alone. It will be necessary to resort to charts. 182 ●

To delineate properly the logic of Murngin totemism, it is necessary first to examine what the ritual realities are in man's relations to the physical environment of northeastern Arnhem Land. We shall be concerned not so much with the obvious realities of the natural environment as with the social attitudes which man has in relation to the various aspects of this environment; both concepts are comprised in the single statement that nature acts on man and man acts on nature.

The technological behavior of man describes his realistic and logical adjustment to his environment. Within this realm of his behavior his attitudes are entirely logical, and his techniques relate him in a scientific way to nature. It will be necessary to restate a few general facts about the natural world in which the Murngin lives. This world consists of two seasons, a rainy and a dry. Man's adaptation to the former is difficult and his adaptation to the latter is comparatively simple and without effort. The total effects on man of the dry and rainy seasons, socially and physically, are felt as comparative degrees of ill-being and well-being (in behavioristic language, the effects of positive and negative stimuli.) 182 821

The Murngin definitely recognize the real relation in nature of the wet and dry seasons, and they understand that the former is necessary to produce the latter. They are also conscious of the physical as well as the social effects on man of the two seasons (see native interpretations of the two seasons and man in them, pages 378-386). The

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Murngin express these effects socially in terms of values: the dry season is considered good and desirable, the rainy season undesirable but necessary to reproduce the benefits of the dry period.

The configuration of native thinking about the rainy season, evaluated under a feeling of comparative ill-being, includes thought of a scarcity of food, unpleasant physical surroundings, a minimum of creature comforts, small horde groupings because of food scarcity, little social activity, as well as the possibility of actual hunger, sickness, and privation, and even death from floods. These last possibilities are fairly remote but nevertheless they have occurred and are in the minds of the people as things that might happen.

The natives evaluate the dry season as one of well-being; and in the configuration of items within this general attitude are included a plenitude of foods, easy and pleasant surroundings and ample creature necessities, large horde groups, intense and enlarged social activity, and pleasant exciting behavior, such as hunting and harpooning; all of these might be summarized under things which are enjoyable and pleasant, and of a positive nature.

Control of the seasons by an adaptive mechanism is necessary if man is to survive. The technology successfully adapts man only to the periods of normal and abnormal plenitude, but it does not adjust him to the abnormal period of scarcity during a long rainy season or when nature for other reasons does not provide sufficiently. Control of nature is one of the functions of totemism, and the Murngin's totemic ideology has one of its firmest and most substantial roots in the negative and positive social evaluation of nature's effects on man's physical well-being and his social groups. The aim of this control, in the light of the above statement about the Murngin's thinking on the seasons, is to endeavor to repeat the pleasant dry period and to control the wet period and minimize its effects.

In the following charts (XII and XIII) the anatomy of Murngin totemic logic as it is expressed in the Wawilak and Djunkgao constellations is analyzed, and the general relations of myth and ritual, social organization and nature as a seasonal cycle are expressed.

Chart XII: Wawilak Totemic Logic

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The Wawilak myth is expressed in the rituals ordinarily by the use of four fundamental symbols: (1) the animals and countries are named; (2) the animals run away into the python pool; (3) the snake swallows the women and animals; and (4) the men obtain the rituals

from the women. These underlying motifs found in the various segments of the several Wawilak rituals are expressed in the chart by the use of the arrows 1, 2, 3, and 4 which relate the myth and ritual rectangles.

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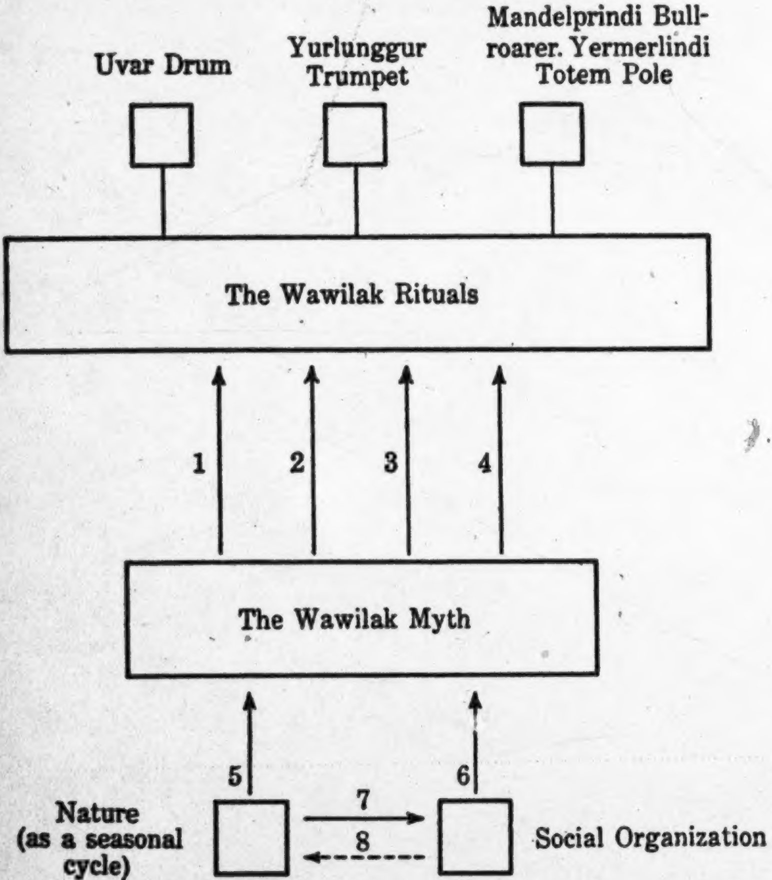
Uvar Drum
Yurlunggur Trumpet
Mandelprindi Bull-roarer. Yermerlindi Totem Pole
The Wawilak Rituals
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2
3
4
The Wawilak Myth
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6
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8
Nature (as a seasonal cycle)
Social Organization

CHART XII.—WAWILAK TOTEMIC LOGIC

There is a direct relation between the myth and the seasonal cycles in the conception of the Murngin, directly symbolized in the myth. This relation is expressed by the arrow 5 leading from the square which is the seasonal cycle to the Wawilak myth. The social organization is also in direct relation with the myth, since it too is directly

182 symbolized by it. This relation is expressed by the arrow 6 which joins the social organization to the myth.

821 Nature as a seasonal cycle definitely affects the activities of the social
173 organization (see Chapter V). This is expressed by the arrow 7, relating the square of the seasonal cycles with that of the social organization. Murngin logic has it that the social organization also affects the seasonal cycle (broken arrow 8), for the rituals are believed to control the wet season. There is thus established a bilateral reciprocal arrangement in the minds of the Murngin which does not exist in reality. This bilateral reciprocal relationship between nature and the social organization is possibly due to the feeling among the Murngin for the balanced reciprocals that exist in their social relations within their social organization, and nature's relations to man are thought of accordingly.

The totemic objects at the top of the chart—the Uvar drum, the Yurlunggur trumpet, the bull roarer, and the totem pole—are manipulated by the rituals to express the symbols of the myth. The myth itself is saturated with the feelings, values and ideas which give this manipulation its meaning, and these values and meanings originate in the social organization directly as expressions of its various parts. These same meanings and values may also be direct expressions of the seasonal cycle, if it is understood that this means that the Murngin conceives the seasonal cycle to be a reality. The relations between seasonal cycle and the society are real, inasmuch as the society adjusts itself technologically to nature by means of techniques, of social values, and the meanings given to nature.

The seasonal cycle and social organization are identified as one in the myth-symbols of the Wawilak myth; and the myth-symbols are expressed and the identity of seasonal cycle and social organization is concretely stated in the manipulation of the emblems and in the rituals which surround them.

All this finally can be summarized: the totemic emblems and the ritual dances and songs express the symbols of the myth; the myth gives form to the meanings, values, and ideas of the society as one in ritual logic.

Chart XIII: Djunkgao Totemic Logic

The Narra and Djunkgao logic is a repetition of the Wawilak configuration. The totemic emblems, ritual, myth, seasonal variations, and social organization have the same set of relations and are or-

182 821 173

ganized into an analogous pattern which functions in the same manner in the general society. The differences which exist are: (1) the Djunkgao myth varies in detail and choice of manifest symbols (the totems are different, for example), and (2) the structure of the Djunkgao myth is not as well formalized and compact as is that of the Wawilak. The myth-symbols are: (1) the movements of the tides and floods; (2) the naming of animals and country; (3) the incestuous relations; and (4) the stealing of the totems.

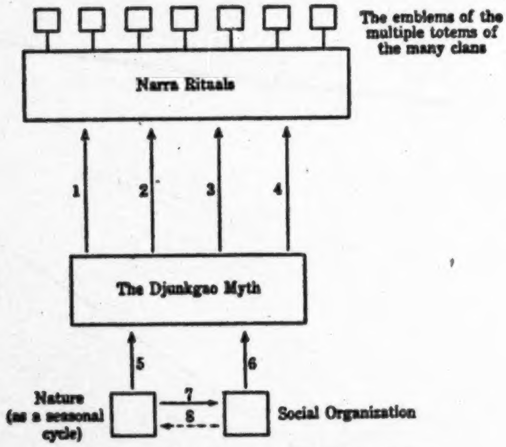
The emblems of the multiple totems of the many clans
Narra Rituals
1
2
3
4
The Djunkgao Myth
5
6
Nature (as a seasonal cycle)
7
8
Social Organization

CHART XIII.—DJUNKGAO TOTEMIC LOGIC

121

It is now necessary, in our examination of the logical methods of the Murngin as expressed in the fundamental pattern of their totemism, further to break down the elements found within the configuration and to look at them in the light of thought processes. To do this I have had the good fortune to be supplied with the method worked out by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in their brilliant book, *The Meaning of Meaning*. Unless the reader is familiar with their technique of thought analysis it will be wise for him to read carefully the summary of their method in the accompanying footnote.[5]—Let us examine Chart XIV.

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[5] See Ogden, C. K., and Richards, I. A., *The Meaning of Meaning* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1927). The authors present their analysis of logical and illogical thinking in our society and the relation of language to it. They use a triangle to illustrate their thesis: the words used in the language are placed at the left-hand basal corner and related to the idea which is being expressed by a solid line running from the base to the apex. The idea is connected with the thing referred to (referent) by a

Chart XIV: Social Logic of Murngin Totemism

121 182 811 In triangle (a) the Wawilak ritual is found at the left-hand base of the triangle, the snake-swallowing-the-women symbol at the apex, and social organization at the right-hand basal corner. The line connecting the Wawilak ritual and social organization is both solid and broken. Certain ideas or meanings of the ritual, concretely expressed in song and dance, relate the ritual to social organization; the meanings, however, are not to be found directly, but are expressed in the concepts of the myth. The social meanings expressed in the ritual are given symbolic form in the myth ideas.

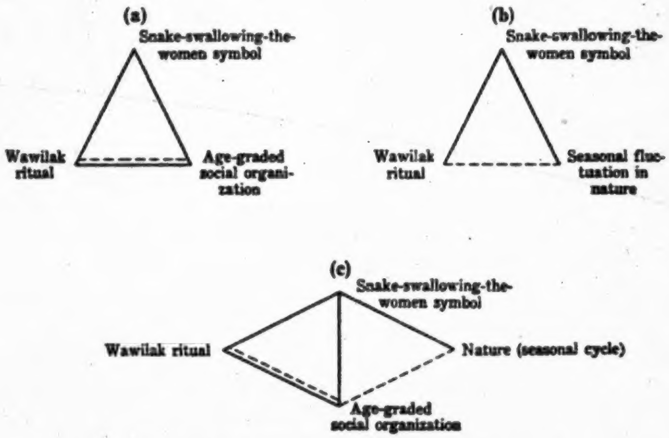
(a)
Snake-swallowing-the-women symbol
Wawilak ritual
Age-graded social organization
(b)
Snake-swallowing-the-women symbol
Wawilak ritual
Seasonal fluctuation in nature
(c)
Snake-swallowing-the-women symbol
Wawilak ritual
Nature (seasonal cycle)
Age-graded social organization

CHART XIV.—SOCIAL LOGIC OF MURNGIN TOTEMISM

It is felt that by manipulating the trumpet totem, one is manipulating the society (cleansing it), but the meaning of this societal cleansing can be apprehended only in the symbols and ideological relations found in the myth itself. There is also a real direct relation, inasmuch

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121 solid line running from the apex to the right-hand base of the triangle. This, according to Ogden and Richards, illustrates the method of logical thinking; the process by which the words used and the things referred to are properly connected by thought.

The thing referred to and the words used are connected by a broken line running from the two sides to form the base of the triangle. The broken line indicates that frequently an illogical direct connection is made between the word used and its referent. The authors brilliantly demonstrate that this is a phenomenon found not only among the illiterate, but quite characteristic of the greater part of our theological philosophical thought.

Bronislaw Malinowski's article on Trobriand language further elaborates the Ogden and Richards method of analysis. (See Appendix to *Meaning of Meaning*.)

as the thing to which the ritual refers (the male group) is directly 121
participating in the ritual. However, when the male group is thought 182●
of as the snake symbol, the rest of the triangle is necessary to explain 811
the thought processes.

In triangle (b) the relation of the Wawilak ritual to the seasonal fluctuation of nature is expressed. The Wawilak ritual is related by a solid line to the snake-swallowing-the-women symbol, as is the symbol to the seasonal alternation. The line connecting ritual and seasonal fluctuation is broken because the Murngin's assumption that they manipulate the variations of the weather is illogical. Triangle (b) hides the basic essentials of Murngin totemic thought because it expresses only part of the symbolism and abstracts this part from its social context.

Triangle (c) expresses the whole conceptual pattern. It combines (a) and (b) and analyzes their relations. The myth-symbol of the snake and women is directly related to both social organization and the weather or nature. Although the Murngin are aware of the connections that exist between the dry season of plenitude and the high degree of social euphoria and the rainy season of want and social dysphoria, their totemic thinking is not concerned with the empirical technological realities. The line from social organization to weather is broken to indicate that the Murngin assume a direct false causal relation between the good or bad behavior of society and the state of nature. If society, it is thought, can properly care for itself in a mundane as well as in a spiritual way, the fluctuation of nature can take care of itself likewise.

Society's technological adaptation to nature with its alternation of adaptive seasonal mechanisms is expressed in the weather symbols with all the feelings and meanings which are a part of this adaptive behavior. The social organization which also undergoes considerable periodic alteration is expressed by the snake-swallowing-the-women symbols. In reality the two aspects of society are being ritualized: the social relations of man to nature and of man to man. It is man's adjustment to nature and his relations to it which are important to totemism, rather than nature as an objective reality. The totemic design symbolizes the idea of the whole group in its intra-relations, and the concept of the group and its relation to nature. The purpose of the ceremonies is to control man's relations with the changes of nature; and the effect is to subordinate, for a time at least, smaller groups to larger integrations, to prevent open conflict, and to express

121 the relations of the various internal groups (clan, age grades, moieties and subsections) to each other.

•182
811
The totemic emblem itself is not an absolute necessity for the expression of the two fundamental meanings of the Wawilak snake-women symbol, since the rituals themselves can express the meanings by dance and song, by the symbolic movements of the body and the use of certain sacred words; but in Murngin religion the totemic design and the totem serve as unifying symbols for the remainder and give concreteness and definiteness to the other symbolic actions of the ceremonies.

The other myth-symbols of the Wawilak ritual configuration could be analyzed in the same way as the snake-swallowing-the-women concept, as well as the Narra, since the several parts of Chart XV could be broken down into the same logical arrangements as Chart XIV.

Chart XV: Nature and Social Organization in Their Relation to Totemism

It is now possible to generalize on the whole of Murngin ritual logic and explain at least some of its meanings. Central oblong 1 of Chart XV is the Wawilak symbol of the snake swallowing the women, or the Djunkgao myth-symbols. Rectangle 2 represents the dramatic rituals which are organically related to the two myths. This rectangle has been redivided to represent the various ritual units which make up the two myth constellations. Rectangle 3 is nature as a seasonal fluctuation or reproductive cycle, et cetera, and is symbolized by the respective myths. Rectangle 4 is the total Murngin group with its age-graded clans and moieties.

The solid lines lettered A, B, and C express the direct connection between the myth-symbols and the two referents, nature and social organization. The thing that is important to notice is that in the general thought there is a syncretistic association of social organization and nature through the connection of the myth and the symbols. The Murngin logic to this point is verifiable and grounded in reality, provided one grants them their choice of symbols and realizes that thus far there is no attempt to connect the two referents; but at this point we must turn to the broken arrow *a*. The Murngin in their logic of controlling nature assume that there is a direct connection between social units and different aspects of nature, and that the control of nature lies in the proper control and treatment of social organization. Properly to control the social organization, the rituals

must also be held which rid society of its uncleanliness. The society is 121
disciplined by threat of what will happen to nature, the provider, if the 182
members of the group misbehave. This brings on an identification of
the social organization with nature, and they are treated as one and 811
expressed as such in the rituals. It can be seen that if one can manipulate the various totems such as the bull roarer, trumpet, and drum through the operation of the concepts of the myths, one cleanses society and by so doing forces nature to function properly. The ritual, then, from the totemic point of view, is a series of manipulations of the totem or the totemic symbols through the use of a set of symbolic actions woven into relationship by song, dance, and word expressions. The rituals relate various parts of the group to each other by use of larger symbols which incorporate smaller ones into configurations that form a unified whole.

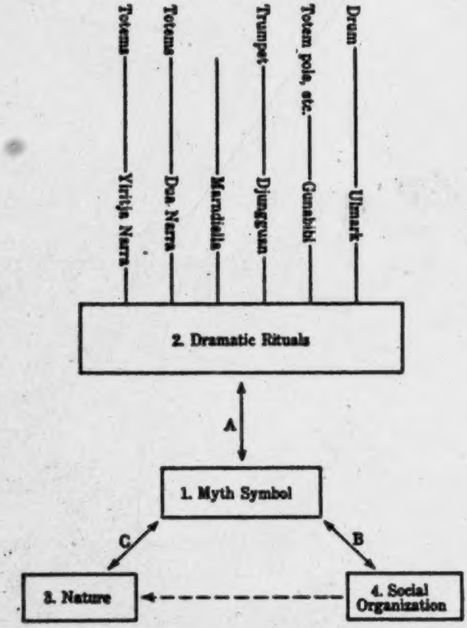
Totems—Yiritja Narra
Totems—Dua Narra
Marndiella
Trumpet—Djunggun
Totem pole, etc.—Gunabibi
Drum—Ulmark
2. Dramatic Rituals
A
1. Myth Symbol
C
B
3. Nature
4. Social Organization

Chart XV.—Nature and Social Organization in Their Relation to Totemism

CHAPTER XIII

INTERPRETATION OF MURNGIN DEATH RITUALS—AN INTEGRATION OF MURNGIN SOCIETY

ALL THE elements of the mortuary ritual are designed, first, to remove 182
the profane part of the human being who has died and, second, to 764
spiritualize his soul and make it like his totem. The first ceremony
sung over the dead (see pages 413-414) demonstrates the intent of the 775
whole ritual. The names of the totems are sung to enable the dying 165
man to act like his totem and become like it, that is, to be completely spiritualized and to remove any of the profane part of his personality. The intent of the ceremony is further demonstrated by the direct native interpretation of the actions of the individual who is mortally wounded in a fight and who performs his totemic dance to direct his soul to his well. In addition, his grandfather or collateral dead kin are believed to come for him to aid him to his well and prevent evil spirits from getting him. The totemic emblem aids their identification of him and makes him "all the same as a totem," just as the carved wooden stick or a wad of bark becomes the totem when it has the emblem placed on it and is ritually sung over. The singing of the garma songs helps direct the soul to the water hole, for "we sing for that warro (soul)—he walks the way we sing." The grave is made symbolically into the sacred totemic well and the Macassar leaving ceremony tells the soul of the dead a last farewell. The grave post and mast are also symbols of this final goodbye. In the exhumation ceremony of some of the clans the body is symbolically speared because it is a whale (totem). The temporary bark receptacle is painted with the totemic emblems, and the coffin itself, which is the final repository of the bones, is a mythical creature associated with the totem. All this clearly shows that one of the primary motives of the ceremony is symbolically to translate the soul out of all profane and worldly contacts and place it finally in the sacred totemic water hole. Another fundamental motif in the mourning ritual is to remove all contact of the dead from the living. The dead person is powerful because he is now a

182 soul and because he has died by magic; these two concepts enter pro-
164 foundly into Murngin thinking about their dead relative. As a soul he
115 can be properly handled by ritual and translated back to the world of
165 the dead, but as a victim of magic—and all the dead are such victims —he is very dangerous (see the chapter on magic). There are, then, a whole series of purificatory rites which serve to sever the dead's relationship to the living. They are of two varieties: the first is symbolically to force the separation from the living, and the second to propitiate the soul and tell it to go quietly to its totem well and not hurt the living. The second variety tends to prolong the ceremony as if the living people were loath to give up the soul to the dead. The first takes concrete symbolic form in the fire ceremonies which chase the soul away, the spider web dance which catches the soul, the pelican or net dance which does the same, and the removal from the group of the scapegoat who has carried the bones. In the second the songs express the indignation of the dead ancestors toward the living because the recently dead was not given better treatment and because the bones were retained by the female relatives.

182 The last primary motif in the mourning rites is found in the various
165 symbolic rituals performed to reintegrate the society, close its ranks after the removal of one of its members, and once more assert its solidarity. Ceremonial food is gathered from the whole group and eaten in the sacred wells made over the deceased's grave and at various other times during the ceremonies. The entire group paints itself and participates in the communion. This general participation is also to prevent the magic which killed the dead from harming the living. The symbolic expression of group solidarity (if the writer's theory of magic is correct) prevents the harmful effects of magic from spreading.

182 The relatives of the dead cannot be in too great haste to dispose of
164 the body or remove the soul from contact with the living, but neither
164 can they keep the soul too long, ("don't be too angry with us,"--see
761 page 417). In either case the ancestors would not like it and would be offended. The living relatives have an ambivalent attitude toward their dead relative. They feel the strong social bond they once had for him. There is a consequent desire to keep him a part of the living and with them, and there is at the same time a feeling of abhorrence and repugnance. The long mourning ritual expresses these contradictions of attitude.

182 The burial of the body for several months allows the emotions of
165

the bereaved relatives to settle; the later digging up of the bones, the 182
women's carrying them, and the final reburial give ample time for the 765
emotions finally to adjust themselves to this major crisis.

An examination of the kinship structure alone, without any conception of the total social personality or social participation of the former member of the living group, shows that if a man's father-in-law, for example, is taken by death from the social group, part of the social structure of the bereaved man is removed—at least the content of that part of the structure is gone. This forces a considerable readjustment by the living son-in-law, not only to his dead kin but to the dead's other relatives who are also his own. It seems highly likely that the period of mourning corresponds fairly definitely to the period of readjustment of the social structure to this social loss. The best evidence of this is that a baby, particularly a newborn child which has little or no social personality and has not become a part of the social structure, frequently has no ceremony for its burial; the women dig a shallow hole, deposit the body in it, and cover it—and it is quickly forgotten.

The social personality of a woman is less developed than that of 182
a man (she does not participate, for example, in large parts of the 765
ritual or directly in any of the spiritual behavior of the group, et 554
cetera). The ceremonies for her are much less elaborate than those for a man. The ordinary man has less made of his burial than a man renowned for his feats of war, unless he has been killed by a blood feud. The death of an ordinary man by the blood feud organizes the major antagonisms and creates strong solidarities in the surviving group of kinsmen and those of the killer. The man who has participated the most in his social structure—a man, for example, who has been a great fighter, a ceremonial leader of his clan, and powerful in his kinship relations—is the person who has the strongest social bonds and who is mourned for the longest. A very old man is given less time in his mourning ritual than a man in the prime of life because his lateral and ascending kinship bonds are less strong—that is, the relatives who provide these bonds have previously died.

The Murngin Soul in Life and in Death.—Each Murngin man and 774
woman has two souls. One is looked upon as fundamental and real, 776
and is felt to be the true soul, the soul from the heart, while the other is considered a trickster, of little value, and only in a vague way associated with the "true man." The first is the birimbir or warro, and the second is the mokoi or shadow soul. The warro is the totemic well

774 spirit. It can be seen reflected in the water when one looks in it. It
775 comes to one during good dreams. The warro, when a man dies,
becomes "all the same as a fish." It lives with and in the totemic emblems. "He walks about with the ranga in the water down below in the well. Our old people reckon this way: he must be all the same as a fish because if a man's canoe tips over out in the middle water of the ocean that old relative's warro comes and helps us, saves our life and takes us up to the shore. If my son went out in the deep water with his canoe he would call out for Banitja [one of the totems of his clan]. After he had taken sweat from under his arm and spit into the water, then he would call out for the warro of his marikmo and mari. Those warros of his mari and marikmo would come all the same as a fish to help him. Warros swim and look like fish. When I look in the water he looks like me. Banitja and warros will also save a man from the sharks as well as from drowning. All the people have warros."

The trickster soul is called shadow soul before death and mokoi when it leaves the body and goes into the jungle and bush country. "Our old people reckon that the shadow soul is all the same as a bad spirit. It's that thing that makes me bad. My shadow always comes with me. The shadows of other things and creatures [beside man] are not souls but only shadows." The mokoi soul is supposed to live more or less all over the body. It is a kind of vague duplicate of it. Sometimes one is told that only the head of a man is made into a mokoi at his death and that mokoi has no body. In the pictures drawn of it and the representations made in the dances, the mokoi is always possessed of a body, but it is distorted and made to appear ugly and unpleasant.[1]

182 The warro is constantly undergoing change of status. It originates
in the totem well, comes to its human father in a dream under miracu-
774 lous circumstances where it is directed to its mother's womb, lodges
778 there, is born in a normal number of months, and then lives in the
heart of the new human organism during the period of the organism's
771 life of the flesh unless it is stolen by a black sorcerer. After death there is a period of some indecision between the land of the living and the land of the dead, but it finally returns to the totemic well whence it came. It is in the symbol of the soul and its relations to the sacred and profane elements in Murngin civilization that we find mirrored the structure and values of the society. The soul supplies the eternal element to the cultural life of an individual Murngin. It lifts man from

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[1] The Murngin ideas about the mokoi spirit are varied and somewhat confused.

the simple profane animal level and allows him to participate fully in 182
the sacred eternal values of the civilization that was, is, and will be.
It finally and eternally ties the man whose heart it occupies to his 774
totem, the symbol of all clan unity in Murngin culture, since the soul 778
at death is one of the prominent elements in the configuration of as- 771
sociated items found in the clan's totemic water, the water which is the essence of life. Here live the great totemic ancestors who existed in the time of the Wawilak creator sisters when the Wongar totems walked the earth, and whose sacred names are used by the profane living only when these living have been purified by the great rituals, when they are part of the sacred and eternal elements in the culture, when man and his totems participate as one in the totemic rituals. Here, too, in the well, lie the totemic ancestors who died at the beginning of time, and the more recently dead whose emotional bonds with the living are still strong. The more recent ancestors who have gone through the long purifying mortuary ritual which removed all the profane elements of the personality (whose mokoi spirit has gone into the bush with his other evil comrades) are, in their nature, of such sacredness that they can be absorbed into the body of the totem itself. And when the totemic essence of the totem animals is induced into the emblem, they also enter and participate in the spiritual life of the Murngin during the great rituals and then return to the sacred water hole. After the ritual, the emblem is buried beneath the mud of the totem well and allowed to rot, and the ancestor spirits and the totemic spirit return to the subterranean depths. Man goes through exactly the same cycle of existence as the totemic spirit. The totemic spirit enters into the sacred water hole, goes through the ordinary water at the top of the well into the subterranean depths, and finally into the totem water beneath, where the Wongar ancestors live, becoming a part of the sacred configuration. The soul does exactly the same thing.

The soul, the totemic spirit, the Wongar or totemic ancestors, are all expressions of the fundamental sacred essence, the ultimate symbol of which is the totemic well, which is the repository of all the individual items which have been or will be incarnate in man or his religious objects.

The kinship organization classifies the social elements of ordinary 182
behavior. The primary kinship system regulates the basic behavior
such as marriage, descent of children, gift-making, economic behavior, 614
et cetera. The moiety and clan generalize and classify this detailed kin- 775
ship behavior into larger patterns; and they also articulate the ordinary

182 614 daily life of the people as it is lived by the kinship group, to the totem well, and the individual to the realm of the sacred and the dead.

115 The unilateral clan differentiates certain lines of patrilineal kin from the kinship totality and organizes them into a spiritual group, the focal center of which is the clan totem well. The totem well as the integrating nucleus of clan solidarity organizes clan sentiments into a sacred unity. The basic factor in this spiritual organization is the relation of the living to the dead and the unborn. The dead souls are grouped into spiritual aggregates based on clan organization. They do not enter into general tribal groupings in the land of the dead, they do not divide on the dual basis of the moiety; but the various male relatives are separated in death if they do not belong to the same clan. Although in life there is an intensely close relationship between the mother's brother and his nephew, in death these relatives are separated by the division of the kinship system into clan groupings of the dead. It is, then, the clan division of the kinship system which orientates the living Murngin to the profane and sacred parts of the totem well and at death places him within the sacred part of the realm of the dead.

182 118 614 The two great classifying structures of Murngin culture are the kinship system and the totem well, both of which generalize the various elements in the total structure. The first basically controls the ordinary daily behavior of the Murngin, and the second organizes spiritual behavior and regulates the activities of the dead. The totem well classifies the totality of the sacred elements of the Murngin social structure. The totemic spirits, the totemic ancestors, the unborn souls and the souls of the dead are all thought to reside within the subterranean depths of the well. It is difficult to distinguish these sacred objects from one another. Even the recently dead soul can become a part of the totem and return in the totemic emblem to participate with it in the great rituals of the people.

The relation of the living to the dead and also the relation of the profane to the sacred can best be presented by Chart XVI. The line A-B separates the sacred from the profane. The seven vertical lines in the lower section which are crossed by the five lateral lines to form the checkerboard with the star at the right center, represent the primary kinship structure of the Murngin. The vertical lines are the patrilineal descent lines and the horizontal are those of generation. The cross-sections of the two form the kinship personality. The star represents Ego. His line and the line to the right of him, which is the mari-

marelker, have arrows pointing up from them to a circle which 182
is their clan; the next line at the right, kutara-gurrong line, has an 778
arrow which points into another well. On the left side of Ego's line is
found the gawel-galle line, combined with the dumungur-waku, and 614
the dué-waku line, combined with the natchiwalker-gawel line into

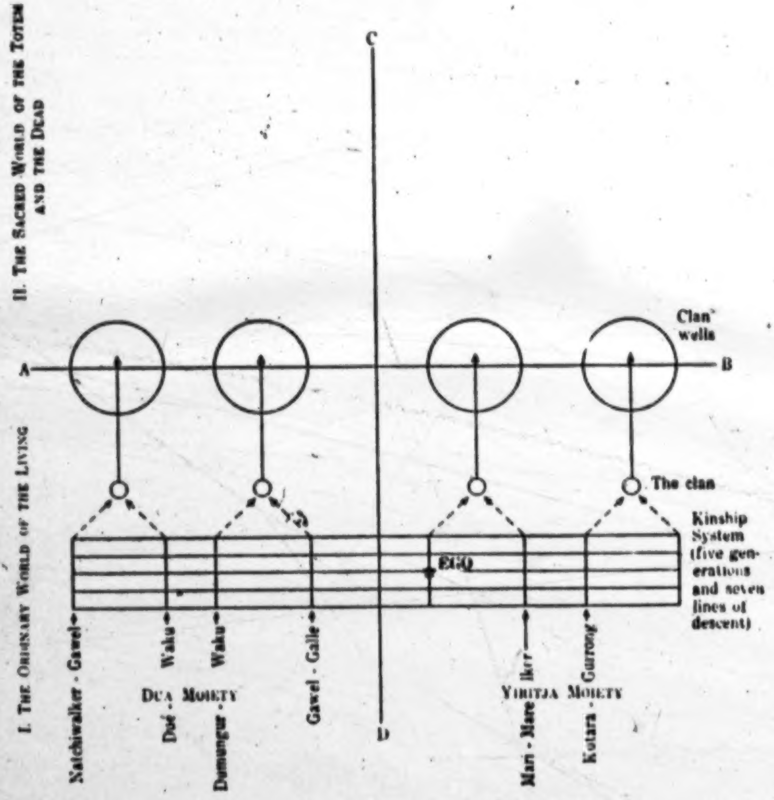
II. The Sacred World of the Totem and the Dead
I. The Ordinary World of the Living
C
A
B
D
Clan wells
The clan
Kinship System (five generations and seven lines of descent)
Ego
Natchiwalker - Gawel
Dué - Waku
Dumungur - Waku
Gawel - Galle
Dua Moiety
Mari - Mare lker
Kutara - Gurrong
Yiritja Moiety

CHART XVI.—THE PLACE OF DEATH IN THE MURNGIN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

another clan group. Leading out of each clan circle is an arrow which enters into a circle above it, which symbolizes the clan well. It will be noticed that the symbol of each clan well will be found half below the line A-B which separates the sacred and profane, and half above it. The arrow leading from the clan to the clan well symbolizes the ritual relation of the profane to the sacred and serves to illustrate

982 how the total life of the people is organized by, and pointed into, the
778 clan well. It also, by piercing the lower and entering the upper half
of the well circle, demonstrates that part of the relationship of clan to
614 well is profane and part sacred. By profane behavior we mean, for
example, the general camp use of the well for drinking water, the
women soaking palm nuts in it, et cetera.[2]

This chart sums up the whole structure of Murngin society and relates the world of the ordinary to the world of the totem from the point of view of the whole group and from that of the individual participating in it.

[2] The dead in the totem wells are related since the living relatives are related because of the organization of the kin into the primary kinship structure. This makes it possible for the souls in the totem wells on the left-hand side of the C-D line, which is the Dua moiety grouping of clans, to stand in kin relation to the souls and the totem wells on the right-hand side of the line. Because of the articulation of the kinship structure to the clans, the totems at each well are also related. This is made possible because the patrilineal lines that enter into each totemic well called the totems of that well by the terms father and grandfather. The collateral relatives call these totems by the term that they would actually use if this totem were the real father of the clansman who uses such a term. For example, if a man in clan A calls his shark totem "father," his waku would call this totem nati.

Emu. It was because they fought that Jabiru stayed by the sea and Emu went into the bush. 773X

Bamapama, Trickster Hero

Bamapama is the trickster hero of the Murngin. He was a man who lived 776 in the mythological period and committed a great number of asocial acts, 773X most of them incestuous. He is depicted as ever filled with sexual desire and always anxious to satisfy it by attacking the wives of other men, particularly those women who belong to his own moiety. He is a somewhat stupid fellow, rather gay, and is usually attempting some trick by which he can satisfy his inordinate lust.

Any attempt to get at a deeper understanding of his place in Murngin culture must consider not only the general content of the stories about him, which follow, but also the effect on the Murngin to whom they are told, the other uses to which the myths are put besides mere story-telling, and at times the reasons why they are told.

The Murngin think of Bamapama as a "crazy man" and one who 828 breaks all tribal laws and cannot be disciplined. A man who is "crazy" and a young man who cannot be disciplined are classed as one and the 626 same. A man of this kind (often called wakinu and "all the same as Bamapama") is usually killed by his own people, or they take him to another country and have some of their enemies kill him. Although an insane person and an asocial person are classed under the same term, there is a distinction made in the behavior of the people toward them, for an insane man is given special treatment and is protected and guarded by all his people.

The Bamapama stories are correlated with the clan local organization. 773X Some of the themes of this cycle are enacted in ritual (see the Marunga 776 clan garma ceremony, pages 564-565). The Bamapama stories, as well as the mother-in-law story (see page 562) function as negative sanctions in the 182 ● enforcement of clan and moiety laws surrounding sexual discipline, par- 626 ticularly that of incest. The stories always elicit gales of laughter and make the trickster a figure of derision; at the same time he is liked as an amusing 522 fellow. He has something of the fascination of the devil in our own society, although it must be clearly understood that the native trickster is not morally as well developed as is our own trickster. Bamapama is a symbol of asocial behavior since he not only breaks the laws of exogamy but acts "like a crazy fellow." When he eats charcoal and "runs around like a dog," when he fights with dogs instead of human beings, the laughter in a group of listeners aroused by his escapades seems to act as a release for the repression of asocial desires in the minds of the people. The Bamapama stories constrain the individual from committing similar acts by his consciousness of the group's disapproval of such behavior and by a disapproval of himself should he even conceive of himself in a similar situation.

626 Ridicule and laughter are two strong sanctions for the enforcement of
182 discipline in Murngin society. The speaker is usually, but not always, an
older man who knows the stories, and the audience is composed ordinarily
776 of younger men. The actions of Bamapama are always asocial. The laughter
522 at his actions seems to serve two purposes. In the first place, it holds such actions as his up to ridicule and scorn and identifies anyone who does such things as being in the same category and worthy of the same scornful laughter; at the same time the various social pressures which are bearing against the individuals of the community to force their obedience to the restricted sexual codes are vicariously evaded and the deeper asocial yearnings expressed by the enjoyment of Bamapama's exploits. It seems possible that Bamapama, the trickster hero, is a creation of the vicarious satisfaction of the Murngin males' inhibited incestuous desires and further serves a positively useful function in bringing ridicule on these same collective individual desires and preventing their direct satisfaction. It can easily be seen that the women also appreciate these stories and likewise derive a vicarious satisfaction out of listening to them.

776 Bamapama is present in the various areas under a number of names, but under all of them he is recognized as Bamapama himself. He was supposed to have lived in the pre-human period, although some of the stories are told about his actions in relation to modern clanspeople.

BAMAPAMA AND GURRONG

X113 That very crazy fellow's name is Bamapama. He is a true bushman. It was in the days of Wongar, in the country of the Burilung clan. All the young girls of the people were sitting down in a line. This man Bamapama went over where they were and looked at them. He looked and looked at these girls. He called them Gurrong. They called him Marelker.

He said to these girls, "You run along here. I want to look at you."

They ran and ran, and then came back. He made each one of them jump over a stick as she ran. He wanted the girls to jump over this stick to see how they would look, for there were too many of them together to tell what each looked like. As each one jumped over he said, "That's no good."

The girls were young and had firm, well-developed breasts. As each jumped over it he scratched his head. Finally he asked them all to run once more, so that he could look at them again.

There was one girl he liked the most. He selected her from the rest and rubbed her back and breasts with his hands. He said to her, "Gurrong, I want you to come with me to this pool where we will catch some fish." He said, "You go ahead and I'll come behind."

He was lying to her. He came by a tree, the bark of which is used to poison fish, and scratched off some of the bark. He put it in the water and poisoned the fish. The fish died and came to the top of the water. Bamapama and his gurrong caught several of them. They put them on the bank

613 171 The point arises here as to whether corporate descent groups of a unilineal nature are common in Australia. They have not been discussed for elsewhere, and the issue remains for empirical investigation. I would suggest that they are present. Take, for example, the vague concept of horde, as a wandering food-collecting group. This consists normally of a small group of men bound together by common descent, plus their wives. Without the latter this is usually of composition similar to that of the unilineal descent group. A great deal has been written, too, of the local group: this material needs re-analysis, in light of some of the problems raised here.[8]

● 182 428 591 We may now consider some of the general propositions relating to the structure of the unilineal descent group, and its place in the total social system, as put forward by Fortes. These aspects, he tells us, hold for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

613 Forde (1947) has discussed the emergence of such descent groups. It is assumed by him, and Lowie (1921), "that unilineal descent groups are not of significance among peoples who live in small groups, depend on a rudimentary technology, and have little durable property" (Fortes 1953:24). Now this is entirely relevant to our material and assumptions, for the descent group we discuss in this paper occurs among an Aboriginal Australian people who, we may assume, conform with the stipulations laid down for the nonsignificance of this group. If we find the unilineal descent group present in this particular situation, we may assume that we will find a strongly emphasized system of transmission of property rights and type of residence after marriage. In the former case, if we consider ritual, songs, invocations, emblems, patterns, and so on as inherited from father to son, with the oblique inheritance of the MARI-GUDARA line, reinforcing patriliny; and in the latter, the importance of patrilocal residence, with its implications relating to the spirit-conception center, these might well be significant reasons for their emergence. A poorly developed technology, and the virtual absence of durable property, are surely not critical factors governing emergence or nonemergence of such groups.

613 121 114 Now I assume from Fortes' (1953:25), "the most important feature of unilineal descent groups in Africa [e.g.] . . . is their corporate organization," that he would regard a group of this kind as a lineage. But can we regard the corporate unilineal descent group discussed in this paper as a lineage? This question I have suggested in the main body of my discussion. I said that each *babaru* could be viewed as a segment, while the parallel linked *babaru*, in toto, could be viewed as an effective lineage. That is to say, we would be considering the linguistic group as the lineage, segmented into effective unilineal descent groups, each of a corporate nature. But this is not a particularly satisfactory position. The question thus arises whether perhaps we can acknowledge the existence of this corporate descent group without considering it a lineage. This, of course, would lead to a more rigid definition of a lineage, when its depth and span would have to be considered.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Fortes (1953:25-26) the unilineal corporate descent group is a lineage: "the way this works depends on the kind of

[4] I would not say, however, that Thomson's material (1949) on ceremonial economic exchange 114
fills many gaps, if any, in Warner's data (see Leach 1951:34). It is obvious, I think, both from his
material and from ours, that exchanges of this nature between M.B. and Sr.S. comprise merely 438
one element in a wide system of economic exchanges. Goods travel backwards and forwards 439
through the network of cognatic relationships, against a background of linked and allied linguistic
groups, in a traditionally prescribed fashion, between certain specified kin, passing outside the 182
periphery of the Wulamba bloc into and from alien Aboriginal or European (or Indonesian, as 602
before) channels. Such exchanges consist of specified objects or commodities, which move in different directions across the surface of the whole country; but this is only one aspect relevant to the total kinship system.

Also, I would agree with Leach (p. 52) that in a marriage exchange the equivalent of a woman 114
is not only another woman, and that the equivalent of a woman may be found not only in goods
and labor and symbolic objects. Certain intangibles can play a part—and these may involve 582
prestige, rights, services, and perhaps status. Little work, as yet, has been done in consideration of 583
these. Reciprocal exchanges between males and females, or between females, should also be discussed in much greater detail, for these are not just reflections of exchanges between male partners. 602
It is not satisfactory to consider an EGO as being always a male, as has been done in most discussions of kinship systems. Where prestations occur between male and female kin, these seem to conform with traditional patterns; but between female kin (i.e., among the Wulamba), this is not so apparent.

[5] Radcliffe-Brown (1931:4-5) calls the local group a horde: he states that each horde is inde- 114
pendent and autonomous, managing its own affairs and acting as a unit in its relations with other
hordes (however, see pp. 28, 106). Elkin (1938:39-41, 73-74) discusses the local group: it is, he 613
tells us, an enlarged family, consisting of a man and his living descendants in the male line; such
a group can be a local patrilineal clan. Elkin then draws a distinction between the local group and 621
the horde, which is as we have defined it above. In fact his statements would, I think, agree with our own here.

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Relationship

All the various individuals of the tribe are related the one 601
to the other, but that relationship is classificatory rather than 602
personal, so that the relationship terms used by us cannot be a correct translation of the terms used by this aboriginal community. In the tribe are a certain number of men whom a given individual will call "father," the individual's actual father being one of that number. Certain other men are the individual's "gowal," or fathers-in-law, his actual father-in-law being included among them.

So all of a number of women of the tribe, including his actual mother, are his "ngandi," or mothers. A number of other women are an individual's "yappa," or sisters, and among these will be included his actual sisters. So right through the personnel of the tribe. Every individual member of the tribe is included in one of these many relationship groups or classes, and every relationship carries with it certain obligations. That is, an individual is required to fulfil the same obligations toward all those who stand in the relation of "ngandi" (mother) to him, as those which are due to his actual mother, and so on.

Thus is determined the attitude of every individual toward 602
every other individual. This system of relationship lies at the [182]
basis of all social behaviour, and is of the utmost importance in
the life of this aboriginal community. In connection with this [153]
system amazing qualities of memory are revealed, practically
every individual knowing in what relation he or she stands to every
one of the several hundred members of the tribe. This is the [588]
more remarkable in view of the dislocation in the regular order of descent occasioned by irregular marriages, of which there are a considerable number.

Character, Arts and Crafts

Personal Character.

152 In personal character these aborigines are light-hearted and
522 happy, with a great fondness for practical joking. Anything which places another in a position of discomfiture is hugely enjoyed. They are quick and rather violent tempered, but on the whole their temper is shortlived.

152 A comparatively trifling offence will quickly result in a general
579 disturbance, in which both sexes engage, and during which weapons are brandished and an amazing amount of mutual abuse is indulged in, but usually little serious damage is done, and, having talked themselves out, life soon returns to its normal course.

157 As might be expected, there are some few individuals of a more sullen and anti-social type who become notorious as trouble-makers, and who constitute a difficult problem for their own people. The outstanding weakness of the aborigine's character is his want of a sense of personal responsibility. Rarely does a man act on his own initiative or assume and maintain an individual attitude in regard to any matter.

[157] This is undoubtedly accounted for by the fact that in the
[182] aboriginal community the unit is not the individual, but the
614 tribal horde. The tribe or group stands or falls together. Every
672 member of it shares in the honour or disgrace of any one of its number. An offence by one member is regarded by another tribe or division as an offence by the whole of the offender's division. All are held as being equally guilty.

614 In such serious offences as occasion the shedding of blood,
628 the members of the injured tribe or division make no special
672 attempt to avenge themselves upon the individual who has actually committed the offence, but are as well satisfied if they succeed in punishing any member of the party to which he belongs. Though the tribe as a whole may strongly disapprove of the action of one of their number, by which action hostility has been created between them and another tribe, they, knowing they are all involved, must nevertheless stand behind this particular individual.

182 In this way is the individual relieved of the responsibility of
157 his own actions, and does not personally realise their results
614
[672] EITHER FOR GOOD OR ILL,

either for good or ill. Thus there are found few natural leaders 157
among these people, a man's individuality being submerged in the 182
life of his horde or tribe. This same fact, coupled with the [614]
extreme isolation in which this race has for centuries lived, has
also served to stultify progress.

Only by a man of exceptionally forceful character could 178
reforms be instituted, and life has consequently gone on
practically unchanged for countless generations.

Toward those whose friendship has been proved these 577
aborigines show a splendid spirit of loyalty. Those who treat
them in a fair and friendly fashion will receive fair dealing and
devoted friendship in return.

Arts and Crafts

The weapons and utensils used throughout this area 411
correspond to the usual aboriginal type, but include a number of
local variations. Little use is made of any weapon other than the
spear, though clubs of several types are used to a limited extent,
as also are boomerangs.

There are many varieties of wooden spears, barbed and
unbarbed, some of which have the head and the haft fashioned out
of a single piece of hardwood in a very remarkable way. Flaked [438]
stone spear-heads are much used, particularly for fighting, and
these heads are traded over wide distances.

The use of iron, particularly for spear-heads and cutting 177
implements, has been known for many decades, this material 411
being obtained in limited quantities from the old traders from 439
Macassar. Only boomerangs of a heavy type are used, and these
are by no means common. The light, return boomerang is
unknown, as is also the shield.

Many types of "dilly-bag" are made, some of which are of 415
such fine texture as to retain water. Others are highly decorated [285]
with feathers or fur woven in during manufacture. The material
used in most cases is the split leaf of the pandanus palm. Other [286]
bags are made of string knotted very neatly and evenly in an
open mesh. Fish nets are also constructed in the same way.

Excellent string is manufactured from bark fibre, grass, fur, 283
and human hair, and is used for a wide variety of purposes. Much
of it designed for ceremonial purposes is decorated with feathers
interwoven during spinning. Strong rope is made of bark fibre
or grass, and used in the harpooning of turtle, dugong, or
porpoise, and for the mooring of canoes.

121 consequently irreligious. Woman, or more precisely her unique
562 ability to create, together with man's power to inseminate, has
771 become a feature of native religion in these areas, crystallized in the
796 concept of the Mother, whom we see manifested in (for instance) the
[831] Kunapipi. The aura thus surrounding, and radiating from, this
[776] Fertility Mother has been extended in some degree to native women
to-day.

Another problem arising from the study of the Kunapipi cult
121 which needs detailed consideration, is that of individual origins.
794 Throughout the greater part of the Territory, specific cults have been
inspired either by one or, in some cases, by two or three Ancestral
773 Beings. Through their own personality and power, it is said, they
succeeded in indoctrinating the whole social group in which they
776 found themselves. They brought with them what appear to have been new ideologies, with attendant ritual, emblems, songs, and mythology in which they themselves now play a dominant part. This individual aspect is apparent in the case of the Kunapipi Mother, who arose from the waters of the Roper River Mouth (*vide* Chapter XI), bringing with her the main features of what we now call the Kunapipi cult. The same principle is evident in the appearance of the Djanggawul (*vide* Chapter I) and of Laintjung (Chapter I) in north-eastern Arnhem Land; both these Beings appear to have inspired virile cults, substantiated by mythology which details their adventures, their activities and beliefs. The society itself, of course, must have been more or less receptive to the introduction of these religious beliefs. That is to say, the religious leader, whether Kunapipi,
[182] Laintjung or the Djanggawul Brother or Sisters, was able to impress
his (or her) own point of view on that society, which in turn was willing to adopt his views and ideas, so giving social impetus to the introduced religion.

This aspect of individual origins, in relation to specific Australian Aboriginal cults, is an important one. The contention, which may be substantiated by mythology and the traditional song-cycles, is that a powerful personality—such as the Great Mother, the acknowledged spiritual leader and inspiration of the Kunapipi cult—possessed of ability beyond the ordinary, can and does exert his or her influence on the society in which he is either temporarily or permanently living; and that influence, helped by favourable circumstances, is sufficient to establish a cult which attracts adherents, and becomes in its own right an important social function and institution.

121 The migration of Ancestral Beings, like Kunapipi and others, into
771 a particular society, bringing with them a religious cult, is a fairly
773 general phenomenon in Aboriginal religious life. Major Ancestral
794 Beings very rarely arise in the country of the people with whom they
are mythologically associated, or in the society which serves as the
776 "incubator" for their specific ideology. Rather, the individual (in

the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the 121
germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, 771
the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with 776
him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether 794
it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a 773
matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, 777
also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or
less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual 794
cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been 797
interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi,
recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been [182]
fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life,
and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which
really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed [171]
in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River-
Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

* * * *

A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi 128
Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value
lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of
data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International [104]
Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3] [126]

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[2] G. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21–23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262–264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50–52.

[3] A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144–176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

Before turning to our main study, we may mention briefly the
778 presence of material emblems and symbols in religious life. This
532 north-eastern culture, far more than those to the south and south-west,
pays great attention to the outward expression of religious and
esoteric ideology, both as a guide to ritual behaviour, and as a means
of impressing certain concepts on the minds of neophytes. In addition
to copies of the *rangga* introduced by Djunggawul, Laintjung and
others, there are many beautifully made *rangga*[4] relating to various
totemic objects and natural species, as well as to human organs and
ancestral people, used constantly as "high" *rangga* in the *nara*
rituals. They are often stylized, made from various hard woods,
cane or paperbark, bound with jungle-fibre twine, painted with clan
totemic designs, and ornamented with colourful feathered strings.
There are also human figures, carved from blocks of wood, and
decorated in the same way. In the Wauwalak ceremonies many other
sacred, *mareiin*, objects are used; the *uwar* drum of the *ngu:rlmak*, the
jelmalandji "posts" and forked stick *djepalmandji* of the *kunapipi*, the
julunggul trumpets and dancing posts of the *djunggawon*. There are
also bark paintings, with sacred totemic clan designs, used on the
ceremonial ground, or with copies of chest drawings.

All these, for the aborigine, are concrete expressions of his
771 religious concepts; they prepare his mind to accept the essence of
778 sacred dogma, and to grasp its significance. As symbols, they keep
alive for him the reality of traditional belief. Faith is essential for
● 182 social cohesion, giving meaning and sanction to behaviour patterns
177 and institutions; its presence has been far more apparent in Aboriginal
societies throughout Australia than in contemporary European
groups. The majority of these aborigines, before contact, believed
implicitly in the essential goodness of their own way of life; all was
explained, each member of the community had a definite place in the
scheme of things, and the future was well determined. To-day, however,
177 ever, the native on the fringe of European culture finds that social
182 conditions are changing, his accepted beliefs have been sharply
questioned, and an alien ideology is being more intensively enforced.
771 His ceremonies are performed less frequently, his great song cycles
sung less fervently, and his sacred objects and paraphernalia are
gradually losing their meaning and function. The cohesive and
integrating qualities of his religion and mythology are weakened,
and finally destroyed. The balance of his own cultural structure, with
all its apparent weaknesses and inconsistencies, is upset by intensive
external pressure and "civilizing" influences. No longer is the pattern
of his life determined by a traditional code. Instead, he discovers
himself to be relying more and more constantly on alien beliefs and
ideas; but owing to the suddenness of the change, and his inability

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[4] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, illustrated.

to adjust himself immediately to the new ways and actions, these fail 177
to satisfy his needs, and so he becomes frustrated and unhappy. 182

We are, however, principally concerned here with the aborigines' 771
adjustment to their own indigenous religion; and within this field we have selected one particular cult, the Kunapipi, which has wide implications and seems to be diffused over the northern part of the Northern Territory.

Can it continue to exist in its present form, in a situation of culture 177 contact? Example has shown that under abnormal circumstances, when the inroads of an alien culture have attacked the social structure 794 of the indigenous society, its survival odds are relatively low. Collapse of Aboriginal community life brings disillusionment, loss of faith in accepted doctrines, and consequent maladjustment. [182] That is to say, as contact becomes more intensive, a cult of the Kunapipi variety will become correspondingly corrupted, and its principal intent will be overshadowed by the distortion of certain aspects which will inevitably serve to destroy it completely.

On the other hand, a cult of this type, which so adequately fulfils an aboriginal's religious requirements within his own cultural environment, is so much a part of his material and psychological make-up, and expresses the basic urges and necessities of his life, should surely find some place in his changing society, among widening interests. This should ideally be the case if the aboriginal is to retain something of his individuality, and not become merely a stereotyped imitation of the European. But this ideal form of adaptation is not to be found in North Australia to-day, and there are no indications that it will be so in the future. Although the indigenous religious faiths still retain their full significance in some [178] areas, in others they are gradually changing, and their hold on the people's life is weakening. In some regions they are merely a shadow [771] of their former selves, distorted to meet the selfish aims of a few maladjusted and frustrated tribal remnants.

Still, however, in outlying camps where aboriginal life proceeds comparatively undisturbed (and there are few such areas to-day) the twirling bullroarer is heard, and the answering call of the women; there is rhythmic singing, and the stamping of dancing feet on the sacred ground echoes through the quietness of the Bush. People have come together to renew their faith, to refresh themselves spiritually, and to ensure that the continuity of the seasons is maintained, as well as the continuance of the life they know and appreciate. The pervading influence of the Great Mother is, to them, a reality.

Significance of the Djanggawul

There seem to have been, originally, several basic types: the *djuda*, 778 or tree *rangga*, from which trees sprang up when the *rangga* was plunged into the ground by the Djanggawul; the *mauwulan*, or stick used by the Djanggawul Brother as a 'walking stick', which he plunged into the ground so that spring water gushed forth; the *ganinjari*, 'yam' or walking stick (sometimes confused with the *mauwulan*), carried by the Sisters, and used for obtaining water in the same way;[1] and the *djanda*, or tail of the goanna, with the same function as the *mauwulan*, derived from the goanna seen by the Djanggawul on arrival at Jelangbara, Port Bradshaw.

These original forms have been elaborated into a variety of [532 *rangga* emblems. They include various poles or objects of totemic *wongar* origin, related directly or indirectly to the Djanggawul; 831] *rangga* symbolizing vulva or vagina, penis or testes; stone *rangga*, derived from a stone which was removed from the vagina of the younger Sister; and conventionalized representations of the Djanggawul themselves, for example, the *wirlgul* (younger Sister) *rangga* or the *gungman* (elder Sister) *rangga*. All of these are decorated [531 with clan patterns derived from those originally given by the Djanggawul[2] to the 'new generation' which emerged from the 614] Sisters' uteri; and most have attached to them feathered string—the red parakeet feathers symbolizing the rays of the sun, the red sky at sunset, or blood from the Sisters. They are used in dancing on the sacred ground, and in posturing before the sacred shade or hut; the latter symbolizes the uterus or *ngainmara* mat, and in it *rangga* are stored just as were the first *rangga* in the beginning. Parakeet feathered string was also among the objects brought by the Djanggawul.

All these objects, then, have symbolic significance, and relate 778 to the basic theme of Djanggawul ritual and mythology. This theme is fertility, manifested in the perpetually pregnant Women, 831 the Two Sisters, in the growth of trees and foliage, in the creation of running springs, and in the abiding and life-giving warmth of 182 the sun's rays. It reflects the Aborigines' fundamental reliance on the products of their natural environment, and their emphasis on the procreation of human and animal life, the continuance of their own species and of the food which supplies them with sustenance. They see the theme of fertility mirrored in their surroundings, and in the rhythmic sequence of the seasons, and recognize their own dependence on these and on other natural phenomena for their very being.

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[1] The two Sisters are also said to have urinated in various places, making sometimes small streams, and sometimes pools or wells: in the latter case, the well itself is often likened to their vaginae.

[2] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, pp. 28–41.

Significance of the Djanggawul

778 These material objects, then, such as the sacred *rangga*, bag and
mat, are focal points, or symbols, through which we may grasp
831 the significance of the concept as a whole. The mat is a uterus
182 symbol; so is the whale, although used in this sense only incidentally.
Here is the source of all life, for it was from the Uteri of the Sisters
that the first people sprang. Moreover, these Aborigines have
[842] recognized the importance of the sexual act in causing conception
and pregnancy. This natural sequence of events has many parallels
in the animal life they observe about them. Throughout the myth
[773] direct references are made to sexual intercourse, while symbolic
references in both the myth and songs are numerous. The *rangga*
poles, the yam stick, *mauwulan*, *djuda* and *djanda* are themselves
penis symbols, an interpretation made quite frankly by the Aborigines
themselves. The poles, for instance, are kept hidden within
the *ngainmara*, and removed from time to time for drying, thus
symbolizing coitus (penis in vagina as a projection of the uterus),
and drying the penis after intercourse when it has become 'wet'
with semen and vaginal juices. Or the *mauwulan* is plunged into the
earth, so that water gushes forth at its removal; this is compared
to coitus, the removal of the penis from the vagina, and the subsequent
flow of seminal and vaginal juices when the Sisters stand up
again. Waterholes themselves are vulva symbols, used frequently
[823 in Aboriginal song and mythology, while trees (for example,
824] the *djuda*) are penis symbols, and their roots are called by the term
used for penis (*vide* songs). A great deal of this erotic symbolism
is expressed in sacred ritual, in posturing and actions.

From this we see something of the importance of sexual intercourse.
831 To the Aborigines, as to us, sex and food are basic drives.
Whatever subsidiary drives exist, these two are fundamental, for
upon them human life, as they know it, depends. The Aborigines
are apt to stress the importance of the sexual drive. 'How else',
they say, 'can we continue as a group? By what other means can
we obtain food except by its natural increase?' Thus even certain
[824] forms of plant life are divided into male and female sexes. Sexual
intercourse is felt to be necessary for survival, in so far as the human
and animal world is concerned, although this survival depends
ultimately on forces beyond the Aborigines' control—on seasonal
fluctuation, and on the sun, and so we come back to the significance
underlying the Djanggawul. The Aborigines of north-eastern and
north-central Arnhem Land consequently pay much attention to
831 sexual matters, and their attitude towards this subject is one of
842 utmost frankness.[1] To them, sexual intercourse is an essential

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[1] *Vide* Introduction to *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (R. and C. Berndt), Viking Fund Series in Anthropology, Yale University, 1951. No 16.

preliminary to pregnancy. Children in this area, for instance, are 831
called *judu* (*jutu*, usually employed in a singular sense), or *djamarguli* 842
(plural). The former word means 'semen'; that is, the child originated from the semen. The latter means 'through (or from) work'; to 'work' (*djama*) a female is to have coitus, and *djamarguli* is literally the 'result of working (or coitus)'.

Erotic references, then, in the Djanggawul cult merely conform 831
to the accepted pattern. To say that the Aborigine is concerned
unduly with the subject of sex, and derives a morbid satisfaction 182
from constant direct or symbolic reference to it, it to distort the 794
actual position. He is frankly interested in the workings of the human body, and in the satisfaction of its basic needs; and he recognizes the fundamental importance of the act, not only in ensuring the continuation of life, but also in helping to stabilize relations between members of both sexes, through their very interdependence. It is not unexpected, therefore, to find manifestations of this interest in Aboriginal religious emblems and mythology, ritual and song. Indeed, what more obvious means of expression could a simple group of people have? Here, in the Djanggawul doctrine, are crystallized their hopes and desires, related to their fundamental drives, co-ordinated with the natural resources and phenomena and with the environment which they know.

Numerous references are made to the removal of the *rangga* 778
from the *ngainmara*, a symbolic allusion also to the removal of
children from the wombs of the Sisters: for *rangga* are likened 773
to children, or human beings, and men and women may use this 182
term to refer to their bones. The spiritual content of the bones is the same as that of the sacred *rangga*, and has, moreover, been passed on from their ancestors—those who were originally removed from the Sisters. When, for example, postulants enter the sacred hut (= *ngainmara* = uterus) on the ritual ground, they are like
rangga being hidden away within the *ngainmara*. In a polygynous [595]
marriage, too, the wives are said to be like *rangga*: their husband has collected them into a group, and has a monopoly over them as
a man has over his individual *rangga*. This likening of women to [562]
sacred *rangga* is interesting, but probably derives from the fact that women themselves are said to be the source of ritual knowledge,[1] and consequently sacred.

There is much stress, too, on the maternal qualities of the 831
Djanggawul Sisters, although the Brother himself is of considerable
importance. The Two Sisters are mentioned far more frequently, 776
particularly in the Milingimbi version of the cycle, although this

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[1] *Vide* Chapters 2 and 3. (See also M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 102–3.)

114 issues. The concept that woman is profane, in comparison with man the sacred, is not a feature of eastern Arnhem Land religious 794 or lay thought.

796 The symbolism in the myth and songs makes clear the intentions of the relevant ritual. In the *dua* moiety *nara*, as an expression ● 182 of the Djanggawul ideology, the major incidents of the myth are re-enacted in symbolic form. Much of this ritual is taken up with [535] totemic dancing; and the animals, birds, reptiles and vegetable matter danced are totemic in so far that they relate directly or indirectly to the dominant theme. Further, these totems are not used only in relation to the Djanggawul, but are part of the spiritual heritage of the *dua* moiety linguistic groups and clans, which in turn are associated with the Djanggawul.

796 *Dua nara* rituals are all inspired by the Djanggawul, although at times irrelevant elements enter; for example, other *dua* spirits 616 or Ancestral Beings of minor importance become associated with the main theme, or *jiritja* moiety elements appear from time to time in the myth. But the Djanggawul are *dua*, and their ceremonies are solely of the *dua nara*, and not (as Warner mentions)[1] of both *dua* and *jiritja*. The latter are inspired by their own separate ideology, and by the Laintjung and Banaitja Ancestral Beings; and although similar in many points, they are basically different. However, it is the practice for some *jiritja* men (maternally related to the *dua* moiety) to help out *dua* postulants, or vice versa: and it is usual for both moieties to hold their own particular rituals at approximately the same time. At Yirrkalla, separate ceremonial grounds and separate huts are used by each moiety; but in the western Arnhem Land variant of the *nara* rituals the same ground is used, although each moiety has its separate hut (or shade), which may or may not adjoin that of the other. In eastern Arnhem Land, the ritual demarcation between the moieties is particularly noticeable.

796 The *dua*, and for that matter the *jiritja*, *nara* are the most important religious ceremonies of eastern Arnhem Land. Being far more 794 important that the *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon*, they are not 885 concerned with age-grading in the same sense that other initiation rituals are. They are primarily revelatory in character; and although novices are received, they are rather neophytes who are already fully initiated into manhood, and already possessed of a certain amount of religious knowledge. By the time a man sees his first *nara* he is well past adolescence, and usually married; he would normally be expected to have already seen the *ngurlmag*; and to be taking a major part in *djunggawon* dancing, as well as in that of the *kunapipi*, although the latter is optional.

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[1] *op. cit.*, p. 340.

796 neophytes, and, 2, those shown only to the older, fully initiated men who are intimately acquainted with all phases of the *nara* and of the Djanggawul doctrine. These latter rituals, involving meditation and theological discussions, are the most impressive of
[616 all. At this time, too, the sacred feathered string is removed and presented to members of the opposite moiety, as well as to younger
431] members in the right line of descent from the ceremonial leaders; that is, a *gudara* (sister's daughter's son) gives to a *mari* (mother's mother's brother) or vice versa.

796 *j*. This is followed, soon afterwards, by sacramental eating of the sacred cycad palm nut 'bread'. All the preparation of this
778 'bread' has been undertaken by the women. It is taken out to the sacred ground where it is sung over, and the sacred *bugali* invoked. All the *bugali* of the country through which the Djanggawul passed, as well as their *rangga*, are called. The actual partaking of the 'bread' may be accompanied by the removal of feathered strings from the *rangga* emblems. This symbolizes the meeting of the Djanggawul with Buralindjingu at Dambojowoi (*vide* myth) when, after the Sisters had had their clitorises foreshortened (that is, the removing of the feathered strings from the *rangga*), they were treated as *galibingu* novices, and palm nut 'bread' was eaten sacramentally. But sacred 'bread' has an additional significance. It is a symbol of all food resources; and when the sacred *bugali* are invoked over it, it becomes possessed of a sacred quality which approximates it to a *rangga* emblem. The eating of it (as a *rangga* emblem) means that initiates are absorbing the sacred qualities of their *rangga* becoming themselves 'more *rangga*', more fully absorbed into the Djanggawul ideology. Symbolically they enter (*rangga* = people) the uteri of the Sisters, so that they may subsequently be re-born, when they leave the sacred ground and terminate the *nara*. The eating of the bread creates a strong sacred bond of friendship between all participants: they become as one.

There are, however, many restrictions relating to the eating of this bread. Not all initiates eat from the same bread, but all those eating must be closely related to one another; for *bugali* names have been 'sung' into the bread, and their power remains in it, and cannot be indiscriminately passed around.

796 After final painting of initiates' bodies, the *nara* is brought to a close.

796 We see from these examples that ritual is the outward expression of the Djanggawul myth. It is primarily a re-enactment of the
182 principal features of the Brother and Sisters' original journey through north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land, and an

important form of expressing these is the totemic dancing in 796
conjunction with the sacred *rangga*. All these are correlated with the
basic theme. The main structure of the ritual refers symbolically 182
to the sexual sequence which culminates in the act of childbirth;
and this, in a variety of forms, is the focal point. It is completely
orthodox, for in it is contained the core, the basic thesis, of the
Djanggawul myth. By re-enacting the primal birth of their ancestors,
the Arnhem Landers convey the sense of 'tribal' (clan or
linguistic group) continuity: a continuity, moreover, which cannot
be broken unless the actual performance of the *nara* rituals is interrupted
or halted. That such an event as abandonment of the *nara* 796
could occur, *cannot* enter the minds of initiates, any more than we
could fully envisage the total collapse of our society and culture. 182
On the fringe of alien contact, of course, in towns or on mission 178
stations, this possibility may vaguely enter the minds of some;
but even these, though they may have taken part in only one *nara*,
cannot consider their utter abandonment. If the *nara* are performed
more irregularly to-day than two decades ago, the intention is
always present in the Aborigines' minds that, if possible, they
will be performed more frequently in the future. The Ancestral
Beings will continue to live, so say old informants, even if the life
that people know to-day should disappear altogether. The Gods
are not dependent on man for their survival, and the 'eternal
Dreaming stream' cannot be stemmed.

Upon this thesis rests the social aspect of the Djanggawul, for 182
re-enactment of the initial birth of the people expresses their inherent 796
fertility, which by the grace of the Djanggawul can be
diffused to embrace a concept of universal fertility. Moreover, it
expresses the seasonal rhythm. The coming of the wet season,
with its rains, germinates the soil; foliage and vegetable matter,
and all the natural species, 'are re-born'. Because of the Djanggawul,
the natural resources of the land are ensured. Man, as a social
being, may continue the life he knows, in the way dictated traditionally
by the Gods. He is assured of survival.

the warmth of the sun, which made it possible for all things to live 773
and grow. 831

Apart from the significance of the myth as a whole, there are
several interesting features. Throughout this version the incestuous
relations of the Djanggawul Brother with his Sisters are acknowledged,
and repeatedly mentioned. It is said that when the Djanggawul
roamed Arnhem Land, there was no marriage system. The
Djanggawul themselves possessed no moieties; it was only later,
when their adventures became a matter of mythology, that they were
classified as belonging to the *dua* moiety. Informants point out that
the Djanggawul made their own laws, and are acknowledged as
law-givers. It was through their incestuous intercourse that the
Two Sisters were able to produce human beings, to populate the
country through which they passed. Even at that early period, the 842
importance of sexual intercourse in relation to pregnancy must
have been realized, for the part the male plays in this activity is
heavily stressed: the emphasis is such that it cannot be a mere
projection of present-day knowledge.

Later in their travels, however, when the Djanggawul arrived
at Blue Mud Bay and also at Elcho Island,[1] the Brother seems to
have altered his attitude towards incest, and to have 'punished'
his sons, by circumcision, for having coitus with their sisters.

It was, nevertheless, the Djanggawul themselves, answerable to 773
no one, who determined their own law, and continued to cohabit
together. The present marriage rules of local Aborigines are said
to have been instituted by the Djanggawul; apart from sacred
ritual, they created and gave to their people the complete structure
of their social organization, with its associated culture. Some
Aborigines, however, while acknowledging the primary importance
of the Djanggawul, hold that other Ancestral Beings and Spirits
were responsible for instituting certain features. Other religious
cults have indeed come into being, among them the important
Laintjung-Banaitja constellation. The Djanggawul, however, are
considered responsible for establishing the fundamental pattern of
this Aboriginal society.

To-day, when that society and culture are taken for granted by 773
its members, the major importance of the Djanggawul lies in their
sacred ritual and in their doctrine, which, regarded superficially, 182
comprises merely the outline of their travels around the Arnhem 778
Land coast. Underlying that story, however, is a vast wealth of
symbolism and allusion, which will become more apparent after 796
we have presented the great song cycle. It is this symbolism which
is expressed in sacred ritual to-day, finding expression in song and

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[1] *Vide* Footnote 5, p. 45.

773 dance, and in the *rangga* emblems and sacred baskets. The *rangga* poles, although modern in manufacture and decoration, are still
182 the 'same' as those used by the Djanggawul, and contain the very
778 spirit that possessed them in that mythological time: they retain
796 the sacred aura of the Djanggawul.

There is no explanation in the myth for the elongated penis and
773 clitorises of the Djanggawul,[1] except that this special feature makes them unique among Ancestral Beings and Spirits of this area. When they had been cut, the severed fragments were treated as *rangga*, or as feathered pendant strings. Some informants insist that the original *rangga* mentioned in the myth were actually the genitalia of the Djanggawul.

Another interesting point raised in the myth is that the Sisters,
773 when having their clitorises cut by their Brother,[2] were treated as
304 circumcisional novices. Immediately afterwards followed the circumcision ceremony at Elcho Island, said to be instituted by the Djanggawul Brother himself. To-day, however, no circumcision ceremony is associated with the *dua nara* rituals; this feature is relegated to the *djunggawon* and *mandiela*, sponsored by the Wauwalak mythology.[3] The *dua nara* is not age-grading as the myth suggests; but since these rituals appear to be more purely indigenous than, for example, the Wauwalak ceremonies, it is possible that they were originally designed for this purpose. In the course of time the initiatory elements have disappeared from the ritual, but remain in the myth; and to-day the ceremony is revelatory in function.

773 Some inconsistencies appear in the myth, but this is not unusual in mythology which has been handed down through the generations by word of mouth. It is something which must be considered: we must allow for differences in theme, for a variety of versions, and for a considerable range in interpretation. Mythology presented verbally in story or song, no matter how conventional the structure of the society, shows a certain amount of flexibility, since the only means of presenting, and thus of preserving it, must be the individual members of that society. The narrator of a story may stress some particular aspect, elaborating it perhaps to the detriment of others. This process, gradual as it is, has cumulative effects; when, as apparently here, it has been continuing for centuries, we may suppose that the myth, for example the Djanggawul, has altered considerably from its original form. This must be taken into account in our analysis of the myth, and in our interpretation of its meaning.

The fact that the Aborigines pay so much attention to tradition

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[1] *Vide* R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters I *c* and IV.

[2] The symbolic significance of these has been treated in the Song Cycle.

[3] *Vide* R. Berndt, *op. cit.*, Chapters I *c* and IV.

this does not apply to the Baijini, who are said also to have been 773
present on the Djanggawul's arrival.

The Baijini, although partially mythological are, rather, historical; 773
for they are said to have been the pre-Macassans, primarily traders
and aliens to the coast, and not in any way creative as were the 178
Djanggawul. They are, however, treated in the myth as if contem-
porary with these Ancestral Beings. This inconsistency, which does 182
not conform to other data relating to the Baijini, seems to be a
projection of the historical into the mythological past, and for this
the necessity for oral transmission, with its reliance on individual
narrators, must be held partly responsible. Although an interesting
feature, and one which illustrates the flexibility of traditional
mythology handed on in this way, contrary material shows that it
must be regarded as an introduced element. This being so, one may
wonder how many other elements, not apparent to the anthro-
pologist, have been incorporated through the centuries. Alien
words or concepts, of course, may be found in many traditional
songs and stories, and are not especially apparent in the great
Djanggawul cycle. The inclusion of the Baijini, and for that matter
of Laintjung, is quite logical from the Aboriginal point of view.
It widens the sacred perspective of the *dua*, bringing it, so to speak,
up to date; for their religion is a living faith, the scope of which
must be broad enough to include all facets of the contemporary
situation. Moreover, it serves to explain why the *dua* may use black
charcoal when painting their sacred clan designs, and why the
jiritja may use certain *dua* possessions, such as red feathered string
from the *lindaridj* parakeet. In this way it correlates *dua* and *jiritja*
belief; and it gives sacred sanction to the *dua* for their use of black
colouring, an important consideration from a ritual point of view.

There is another inconsistency, too. We are told that the Djangga- 773
wul are creative, and thus 'super-human': they are, virtually,
Goddesses and a God; and yet they behave in very much the same 776
way that human beings do to-day. They are, that is, made in the 182
image of man; but they are not answerable to man. When they behave
in a super-human way—in their creative feats, in the miraculous
reappearance of the younger Sister after being killed by sorcery,
in their possession of elongated clitorises and penis—they are pro-
jections of human wishes and ideals, possessed of qualities which
these Aborigines find particularly attractive or important. Such
projection, however, may take place only at a subconscious level;
the repressed desire for incestuous relations, for example, severely
prohibited in everyday life, finds an outlet in mythology. The
Djanggawul Sisters represent an ideal of Arnhem Land womanhood
—ever bountiful, ever fertile: for this aspect is paramount in the

773 society of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land, which
776 places considerable stress on female fertility among both human
182 beings and natural species.

On the whole, however, the Djanggawul are very much like ordinary mortals. They depend on natural resources for food and sustenance; they must walk in order to traverse the country, and use canoes to cross the sea and rivers; they enjoy the satisfaction of coitus, the warmth of the sun and of fire; they sing and perform ritual. Moreover, their super-human powers do not seem to avail them when forced to alter their direction because of a *jiritja* moiety dreaming, or to move their camp, as in the case of the *jiritja* spring water at Elcho Island; or in the case of sorcery, as when Miralaidj was killed. The myth, then, deals with Beings whose behaviour, although they are super-human, approximates that of ordinary man. The myth is correlated with a way of life that the Aborigines know and appreciate, and consequently has a greater hold on their emotions; it involves a faith of which the adherents include all members of the society. The sacred aura of the Djanggawul extends over man, woman and child, bringing them all within the sphere of its religious expression, as manifested in the songs and the ritual.

Another feature is the segregation of the sexes when, in the myth,
773 female children are placed under the *ngainmara* mat, and male
182 children in the coarse grass. This reflects the Aborigine's assumption
that man's rôle in life is rough, his activities are more strenuous
562 than those of women, he takes the initiative in fighting, and altogether carries out the heavier work. His skin too is coarser, from
[826] his original exposure by the Djanggawul, while the contact with
grass resulted in his growing facial hair. Women, on the other hand, were handled with greater care, protected from the harsh glare of the sun, from the rough ground and the grass. Because of this initial treatment, they are supposed to-day to be soft and yielding, with no facial and the minimum of body hair; and they are not, in theory, expected to carry out strenuous work. In reality, however, they are not the demure and submissive creatures idealized in this section of the myth. When the occasion demands, they can undertake equally difficult and strenuous activities, and possibly have greater endurance than men over a period. Nevertheless, the myth implies that they should in some measure conserve their strength to expend in sexual intercourse and childbearing. This twofold distinction between the sexes, on both physical and psychological grounds, is fundamental in local thought, with important effects on expected and actual behaviour. It is most interesting that we should find it expressed, in these terms, in a myth which purports to offer explanations of basic drives in Aboriginal society.

The Content of the Myth

The rôle of women in sacred ritual receives attention in that 773
section of the myth which describes their losing to the men the
sacred dilly bags and *rangga* emblems. This has considerable bearing 562
on the concept of what is rightly sacred and what profane; the theory 182
that women are profane because they do not take an active part in
many religious ceremonies has been the subject of much discussion.[1] 778
Although it is not the place here to discuss the question in any detail, a few points are worthy of notice.[2]

The north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Landers' conception of sacred life, as mentioned, encompasses all members of the society, irrespective of sex. The 'aura' of religion, as they know it, permeates all cultural institutions, from the most simple or mundane to the most complex. According to the Djanggawul ideology woman, in the shape of the Two Djanggawul Sisters, was the source of all religious ritual, a fact which becomes apparent after studying the symbolism of the songs. At the same time, man's complementary part must not be underestimated. It might be suggested that because to-day the myth and associated ritual, with the songs, are now largely in the possession of men, the peculiar reproductive function of females has been more strongly stressed. It is reasonable to suspect, also, that if the Djanggawul had not lost their bag and *rangga* emblems, so that all ritual had remained in the hands of women while men continued to play a subordinate part, the emphasis would have been on the procreative abilities of the male sex.[3]

It is possible to conjecture that, by and large, members of one sex would be more intensely interested in the procreative and sexual function of the opposite sex than in their own. Whether or not the stress on female fertility was an 'original' manifestation,

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[1] *Vide* B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1938, p. 464; P. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane*, 1939; C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, Cahiers d'Ethnologie, de Géographie et de Linguistique, I, Paris, 1950.

Émile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1926, acknowledged that women's part in Aboriginal sacred life was greater than his direct references would imply (p. 138, footnote 6).

[2] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, 1950, pp. 28–33, and R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters I *c*, III and IV.

[3] *Vide* M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 102–3, in respect of some New Guinea tribes. 'The basic theme of the initiatory cult . . . is that women, by virtue of their ability to make children, hold the secrets of life. Men's rôle is uncertain undefined . . . man has hit upon a method of compensating himself for his basic inferiority . . . Behind the cult lies the myth that in some way all of this (ritual behaviour) was stolen from the women . . . men owe their manhood to a theft . . .' This is a particularly interesting thesis, which would repay further detailed attention.

773 as the myth would tend to explain, it is now almost impossible to
562 tell. We can say, however, that on the authority of the myth, the
182 ritual and the songs, together with certain emphases and attitudes
778 current in contemporary Arnhem Land society, it does seem that
the source of this religion may be found in female fertility. At the same time the peculiar function of the male, in the sexual act and in procreation, is treated in much symbolic detail. Summing up the relevant treatment of male and female in the Yirrkalla version of the Djanggawul myth, we arrive at the conclusion that both played an equally important part. In the Milingimbi version of the same myth, however, woman's part is stressed to such an extent that the Djanggawul Brother makes no appearance at all in the story.[1]

In the myth the Djanggawul Brother and his companions brazenly stole the bags and *rangga* from the Sisters, offering no compensation in return. Their separate rôles were then automatically reversed, so that women instead of men were obliged to collect food. The crux of the situation, however, is apparent from the remarks made by the Sisters immediately after their ritual exclusion. 'We know everything. We have really lost nothing, for we remember it all, and we can let them have that small part. For aren't we still sacred, even if we have lost the bags? Haven't we still our uteri?' This is still the attitude of the women.[2] Woman herself is still sacred—not merely her procreative organs, her menstrual and afterbirth blood,[3] but herself as a member of the female sex. She did not contest the action of the Djanggawul men because her rôle in society is conventionally one of submissiveness, arising from her treatment when removed from the Djanggawul Sisters' uteri.

However, the whole problem of respective male and female sacredness is too complex for the cursory attention which is all it can receive here. To examine it in detail, from the point of view of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land society, would necessitate the presentation of the Wauwalak Song Cycle, an examination of *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon* rituals,[4] and a

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[1] Milingimbi version to be presented later. *Vide*, for example, L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 336–40.

[2] My wife's work among Yirrkalla and Milingimbi women bears out this statement. Their knowledge of sacred ritual is far more extensive than we have been led to believe, while their active participation is far from insignificant. The same holds good for certain other areas, for example, western Arnhem Land and Central-Western Northern Territory. See C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, *op. cit.*, 1950.

[3] There is a cultural stress on these features in Arnhem Land society. See *Kunapipi*, Chapter III.

[4] This has been treated briefly in *Kunapipi*, especially Chapter III.

discussion of contemporary behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, 773
it is one of the most important issues raised in the myth, and funda- 562
mental in our conception of Arnhem Land religion. By admitting 182
the place of women in ritual life, we extend the function of religion 778
so that it is not solely, or even partially, the prerogative of man. Each sex has its definite and traditionally defined rôle; and by accepting this premise we realize the potential greatness of a faith which has meaning for all the members of the society.

Chapter Four

THE DJANGGAWUL SONGS

533 538 The songs of the *dua nara* include some of the most beautiful literary efforts of Aboriginal Australia. They are poems set to traditional tunes, outlining the activities of the Djanggawul. In essence, they represent the original songs sung by these Ancestral Beings in the Dreaming Times; but through the ages they must have undergone a certain amount of alteration, a process to which they are vulnerable on account of their length. This is not to suggest that their content has necessarily been distorted, but merely that, through the course of generations in a non-literate society, they have not come down to us with exactly the same form and content as when they were sung by the Djanggawul.

538 The songs of north-eastern Arnhem Land, of which some examples have been set out elsewhere,[1] have a unique place in Aboriginal Australia, for they are longer and expressive of greater detail than those found in other areas. In structure and approach they differ from those of, for instance, southern Arnhem Land,[2] or Central-Western Northern Territory.[3]

538 182 These songs are poetry in their own right, and express the spirit of the culture to which they belong as, perhaps, no other

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[1] See R. Berndt, 'A Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone', *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 16–50; 'Badu, Islands of the Spirits', *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, pp. 93–103; C. Berndt, 'Expressions of Grief Among Aboriginal Women', *Oceania*, Vol. XX, No. 4, pp. 286–332, and 'A Drama of North-Eastern Arnhem Land'.
Also see R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, for publication.

[2] *Vide* R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters VII, VIII, X, XI.

[3] C. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, 1950.

medium can do. In this respect they are inseparable from that 538
culture, expressing as they do something of the Aborigines' sense
of the beautiful, their feeling of strength and sureness in the essential 182
goodness and vividness of their own way of life. This is an important
point, for as these poetic songs stand to-day they represent the
achievement, not of individual men or women, but of the community
as a whole. Moreover, this achievement does not belong
to any one era, but is the culminative result of centuries of effort—
how many, we shall probably never know.

The songs are an integral part of the Djanggawul myth and of 733
its ritual, for these three elements are interdependent. The 538
Djanggawul myth, as set out in Chapter 2, is rarely told by a
story-teller; it is, rather, sung out, in the manner of the songs 533
presented here and in following chapters. What is more, no *nara*
ritual is performed without the accompaniment of these songs.

These songs are not merely traditional; they are also sacred, 538
because each is essentially of divine 'composition'. They set out
to describe in detail all the incidents that took place during the 533
wanderings of the Djanggawul, from the time they left their spirit 778
home at Bralgu until they reached the neighbourhood of Milingimbi.[1]
There is a certain amount of repetition, beloved of the
Aboriginal song man; there are 'inside' and 'singing' words,
alternatives to those in everyday use, and a wealth of symbolic
allusions. The language of the songs is not archaic or highly [192]
specialized, as found in some areas in reference to sacred singing,
but is for the most part the ordinary language spoken by the
people. This is interspersed with occasional sacred words, 'singing'
words, or invocations used only in this context; but essentially
the songs are constructed in such a way that all may understand
them. They are sung according to a defined traditional
rhythm, the words being abbreviated, lengthened or elaborated
to meet the requirements of the tune, while the development
of the theme proceeds graphically with the help of considerable
detail.

These Djanggawul songs express the essence of ceremonial 533
behaviour, and of the relevant mythology, and through them we 182
understand the significance of the *dua nara* and of the Djanggawul
cult. To appreciate them fully, it is necessary to understand thoroughly
both the ritualistic background and the mythology, in conjunction
with other facets of the cultural pattern of this area. While the
song is in progress, participants and onlookers alike are reminded of
the intent of the ritual—but not of that intent alone, for these sacred

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[1] As mentioned elsewhere, this journey is extended in the Milingimbi version of the Djanggawul cycle.

The Djanggawul Songs

533 songs are possessed of a sacred power peculiar to the Djanggawul.[1]

182 The songs, since they 'belong' to the divine Beings, give the ritual an atmosphere of reality, in the sense of veracity, and a deep consciousness of affiliation and continuity with these Beings themselves. Sacred songs, sung on the ceremonial ground by hereditary leaders, in conjunction with ritual and dancing, and in the presence of religious symbols or emblems, vividly reflect and re-inspire the religious emotions of all who hear them.

126 538 128 The songs presented here are translations, and have inevitably suffered in the process. To appreciate all the subtle turns of phrase, the abundant allusions and so on, one should read them in the original, interlineally translated, in conjunction with copious notes.[2] It is only through understanding of the language that we can derive the fullest benefit from these songs.

Nevertheless, we have adhered strictly to the literal translation of all words in the songs, endeavouring to retain the beauty of the original. Difficulty has been experienced, however, in finding satisfactory English equivalents for certain words. The translation errs, perhaps, on the side of restraint, for many of the English words used (unlike those in the Aboriginal text) may appear prosaic and lacking in poetic value. The different words referring to sounds of various kinds, for instance, are not easy to transcribe: and 'noise' is a poor, although often necessary, substitute.

No attempt has been made to conform to the original rhythm and metre, since this would involve manipulating the translation at the expense of its actual content. The arrangement into lines conforms to the pauses made by the Aborigines themselves when singing or reciting.

128 Comments or notes are not attached to each song, as in the case of the originals, but any points that seem to need discussion have been referred to in the section immediately following each part of the cycle. For convenience, and to facilitate the gradual development of our analysis, we have set out ten parts to this epic, corresponding to various stages in the travels of the Djanggawul.

As the songs progress, from one stage to another, we may follow the symbolism and intent which have already been indicated in earlier chapters. The significance of each part will be treated briefly at its conclusion, so that at the end of the epic the whole may be viewed in proper perspective.

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[1] In *Kunapipi* (*op. cit.*, Chapter VII) it was said that 'the songs are the echo of those first sung by the Ancestral Beings: the spirit of the echo goes on through timeless space, and when we sing, we take up the echo and make sound.' This applies also to the Djanggawul songs.

[2] These are to be published separately through the journal *Oceania* as a monograph, on account of the great number of phonetic texts. The serious reader or student is advised to read these in conjunction with the translations set out here.

Chapter Twenty-five

EPILOGUE

121 113 We are now in a position to summarize and discuss the contents of the Djanggawul epic, as described in the Yirrkalla version. To facilitate this, a chapter of detailed comments has been added to each part, or group of songs. These separate chapters have reviewed briefly the significance and symbolic intent of each song; they have indicated, too, the various threads running through all the parts, and their interrelated themes. We have thus already glimpsed the cycle as an integrated whole, and noted the fundamental elements which have emerged. It remains, now, for us to draw broad conclusions on this basis. Final conclusions must, however, rest on our analysis of the Milingimbi version of this same cycle. That version is complementary to the one reviewed here, and although its basic themes are similar, and its fundamental intent is the same, it does contain a number of additional features. These differences, insignificant as they may seem, must be taken into account in making our final summary of the Djanggawul cult in north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Land.

● 182 113 533 Reading through the mythology and songs of the Djanggawul cult, we can perhaps begin to appreciate something of the care and thought which have gone into their construction, in the form in which we see them to-day. Through them it is possible for aliens such as ourselves to understand in some degree the fundamental issues involved in one Aboriginal religious cult. Moreover, it is only through the medium of such material, particularly in the form of interlinear translations, that we may attain more than a superficial understanding of Aboriginal thought and behaviour. These

songs express what may be described as the spiritual quality of 182
this particular Aboriginal society. They are essentially traditional, 773
and have developed within the society as the result of group rather
than of conscious or acknowledged individual effort. The individual 533
is thus subordinated to the social conscience, in that he becomes the
instrument through which they are transmitted, and through
which they continue to live. The fact that he may add something to
them in the course of transmission is not, here, a significant factor
in this process: for if their inherent 'power', or their sacred aura,
is to remain, they must retain what is felt to be their original structure
in recognizable form. In this lies their essential value as documents
of social thought and religious belief. Being predominantly
traditional, they stem from the past; and because the concept of
the 'Eternal Dreaming' is a living reality in Aboriginal life, these
songs continue to retain at least the main ingredients (or what
people themselves regard as the main ingredients) of their original
content. Moreover, their oral transmission has been associated with
special rhythms and ritual postures, and with accompanying dances,
providing means of expression for the sacred thought and emotion
not merely of one but indeed of many generations of Aborigines.

The Djanggawul songs and mythology comprise a body of 773
knowledge which is not restricted, in the sense of being available
to only one section of the community, but is shared by all adults 533
and (to a much lesser extent) children. For practical purposes, a 562
distinction is made between, on the one hand, the executive 184
authority wielded by the men, and on the other, the more submissive
participation of the women. Women know the content 778
and rhythms of the songs, but 'officially' they are not supposed to
know the ritual or the sacred invocations, or to see the *rangga*
emblems. Generally speaking, however, they do know more about
these than would be suspected from conversations with men alone.
A number of women have described to my wife, in confidence,
various features of the rituals performed exclusively and 'secretly'
by men. They have described the *rangga* emblems, and told her many
of the sacred terms used in invoking. An explanation of this lies
in the Aborigines' concept of sacredness, which is not restricted
to the confines of the ceremonial ground. It is, on the contrary,
widely diffused throughout the society, and appears to permeate
every institution and activity of the people. Women, as we have 773
seen, by virtue of their childbearing ability as symbolized by the 533
womb, possess a special sacred quality peculiar to themselves, in 562
which men may not share. However important man may be— 778
and the indispensable part he plays in conception receives much
attention in the Djanggawul epic—woman has the more spectacular

which is created by the Djanggawul themselves. The *rangga* folk 533
dance from the wombs of their Mothers into the *nara* shade; the
sacred clapping sticks are beaten, the songs rhymically sung, and 539
they sway their bodies in the dance. The first *nara* is being performed, re-enacting the travels of the divine Beings; and the *rangga* folk have been produced 'so that they may follow the law'. The people, that is to say, by performing the *nara*, by re-enacting the travels of the Djanggawul and manipulating the *rangga* emblems, ensure the continuation of the life they know and love. The *nara* performed by the *rangga* folk under the direction of the Djanggawul is described as being exactly the same as that carried out by present-day Aborigines. It expresses the faith which they have in their social group, in their culture, and in their environment; it ensures the continuance of all the elements expressed directly and symbolically in the myth and in the Songs. Women will continue to bear children, the seasons will continue to come and go in ordered sequence, and the land will continue to produce food in abundance. All this will come about only if the *nara* is enacted, if the power of the Sacred Beings is made available, and if the faith of the people themselves—both men and women—retains the intensity and depth originally inspired by the Djanggawul.

The implications of the Djanggawul cult are numerous, and should 794
be the subject of detailed and comprehensive treatment. Here,
however, we can touch on them only briefly. 182

There is, for instance, the assumption that these Beings came from another country, somewhere to the east or north-east, bringing with them their sacred objects and ritual, and the essentials of their cult. That is, they were originally aliens, who presumably introduced their ideology to the indigenous inhabitants. The latter are here referred to vaguely as spirits, and not as human beings; this is, possibly, a form of rationalization, to the effect that the first 'real' people were those who adopted the Djanggawul cult.

Then there are what may be termed the various psycho-analytic points of view. Followers of Géza Roheim, for example, may see in the stress on the Mother, and (for instance) the identification of circumcision with the severing of the umbilical cord, a manifestation of the universal Oedipus Complex. Abram Kardiner and his school may find in the Djanggawul a projection of the emotions arising from the Aborigines' response towards their own parents during their early formative years. Moreover, the myth and songs may perhaps be regarded as, primarily, an expression of the fundamental motivations of the people, the narrative itself serving merely as a connecting thread, which provides a semblance of coherence.

Epilogue

794 Certainly we may assume that the elements which have been transmitted from one generation to another bear some relation to
● 182 the cultural emphasis of the people, the emphases during the process being on those which were (consciously or otherwise) felt to be congenial. However, this question obviously raises many issues which cannot be dealt with here.

Finally, what is the future of the cult in the contact situation? The theme of fertility is obviously important in this respect, affecting as it does the continuance of the local Aboriginal group. Elsewhere in Australia, with few exceptions, the Aborigines have
[161] declined in numbers under the disrupting influence of the alien culture. In north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Land, the emphasis on reproduction, among both human and animal species, appears to have served, so far, as a potent factor in combating this trend. The Djanggawul cult, therefore, may well be significant in helping to ensure that the Aborigines of this region continue to survive. Perhaps because of its basic associations, it is still a vital force in the society, with (in so far as such comparisons are possible) an even greater emotional hold on the people than other local cults which flourish contemporaneously with it.

000 This subject, too, needs careful consideration. Nevertheless, if something at least of the faith and the beliefs of the Djanggawul cult can be carried on into the changing society which is developing as a result of alien contact, it may help to ensure the north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Landers' physical survival. Moreover, the blending of such essential features of their traditional life with the new elements which they inevitably absorb from the alien culture will provide them with a situation which is in some degree congenial to them; and the psychological effects of this will have, also, an important bearing on their survival.

The themes which we have noted in this work are not limited in their application to one human group in one specific area. Although phrased in the terms of this particular culture, they have, so to speak, a universal validity. This being so, there is no reason why the Djanggawul cult, adapted perhaps to meet the demands of the present crisis in Aboriginal life, should not endure as a living faith, to play its part in ensuring the continuity of the Aboriginal group, as a people adjusted to meet, in their own way, the changing world which confronts them.

461 based on the activities of adults, there is no idleness. Even the young men are engaged fully in hunting and fishing activities and work hard, in marked contrast with the conditions in similar groups close to white settlement, where the organisation is breaking down. Neither men nor women are idle for long, and even in camp as they sit around their fires they may be seen to pick up a basket, a fish net, a spear or other weapon, and work at this as they talk, just as they did when they halted at midday to rest and to cook food. Yet there is no feeling of haste, but rather of method, of system and order.

182 What are the drives, the incentives, which lie behind
461 all this organisation? Why does it move so smoothly, and
what induces these people to work hard, so willingly,
without any *apparent* direction, control or authority?

182
461 First and foremost, the organisation is based on the
773 traditions laid down by the totemic ancestors and handed
down in mythology, in the culture myths which the natives
believe to be a history of their own clan ancestors. This provides
a charter for all their activities, it gives them a plan,
a motive, for their lives, which they believe are a recapitulation
of the lives of the clan ancestors, who "showed the
[861] way". Each individual is born into this pattern and learns
as a child the part he has to play as a unit in the family and
182 clan. But it is not all impersonal, for as a clan member he
461 fits into the kinship network, in which, although his
602 relationship to all the people in his own and neighbouring
554 clans is laid down when he is born, and his behaviour and
obligations to these people clearly defined, these acquire
a reality, a vital significance, because they are personal and
deal with real people. No member of a well-organised society
would willingly lag behind in his obligations. On the faithful
discharge of these, on his ability to hunt, to bring his con-

tribution of food to the group, to make payments, to give 182 and return presents of food and objects of value, depends 461 his reputation as a man, his prestige, his feeling of success 554 [602] as a human being.

Again, a successful hunter, especially one who has achieved renown in the pursuit of animals that are difficult to kill and which thus acquire a high social value, earns the title of *tjämbait,* while a woman renowned as a food gatherer is *bärtatumoro.* These titles are greatly coveted, and the right to them confers a considerable amount of prestige. If a man is called *tjämbait* to his face he will flush with embarrassment and pleasure, passing it off with a disclaimer, "*ŋärra bordin*", literally, "I am quiet" (non-aggressive), but no man would wish to be stigmatised as *tjämbaitmiru*[17]—without prowess in hunting. It would be an intolerable humiliation, a blow to his pride and prestige, to his sentiments as a successful human being.

I remember often when coming in from the hills after hunting wallaroo and Red Kangaroo, being greeted by a man who would say to me in the curious, stilted, artificial sing-song voice they reserve for these things, "Eh! *Wa'wa tjämbait*!" "Ah! my elder brother *tjämbait*!" "Well done, my brother." That, among a renowned hunting people, who live by the spear, is a proud title.

The kinship pattern is a system of obligations and counter 182 obligations, and even if he is content merely to discharge 431 461 these to the extent necessary to maintain his prestige, a man [554] must necessarily work hard. To receive gifts of food and 602 other presents which demand return gifts, and not to reciprocate, places a man under an obligation, which to a normal individual is an unbearable blow to his pride.

And these obligations are not confined to members of

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[17] *-miru,* suffix meaning without, lacking.

182 a man's or woman's own horde with whom he or she comes
431 into daily contact. They extend also to members of
461 other hordes and are emphasised strongly on occasions
602 when people from distant groups to whom the kinship
[574] organisation is extended, come as visitors. For a young man, such obligations are intense, and to discharge them he is obliged to keep up an almost continuous stream of presents, which entails constant work.

182 With each successive stage of initiation it is obligatory
431 for him to make gifts to the old men of the clan group into
461
626 which he is being initiated. This may become very irksome
561 and may even reach a stage when no matter how hard he works he is unable completely to discharge all his obligations, so laying himself open to the fear of reprisals, such as
[754] visitation by *ḳälḳa* (sorcerers who kill by the use of magic) or by other agencies. Fear of the use of secret methods of reprisal is a very real one, and provides, for a man, one of the strongest inducements to work, to keep pace with his obligations, and so to give no cause for resentment.

431 In those ceremonies such as the *ḳunabibbi* and *ŋulmarḳ*
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796 which transcend clan and tribal boundaries, and are not
614 restricted to, or regarded as the proprietary right of, a
778 small group such as a clan, but are practised widely throughout the territory, these obligations are less onerous. In others, of the type called *märdai'in*, the initiation ceremonies carried out by each clan or group of clans sharing the same totems, at which its sacred totems are revealed, the burden of the gifts or payments is a heavy one. The internal solidarity of these small groups is intense, and their *märdai'in* or *räŋga*—the secret name for the objects which represent the *mälli*, the "shade" or "spirit" of the totemic ancestors themselves—are jealously guarded. These *räŋga* are very sacred and are regarded as dangerous to the

431 which are stripped from the *räŋga* and presented to special
554 individuals after the conclusion of the ceremony, and which
[777] carry *marr*, confer prestige on the recipient and bring him
[796] "good luck" (*tjämbait*) in hunting.

431 But in any case, failure to discharge the obligations which
554 he incurs at these times would be unthinkable, for a man
626 believes that he is in a state of danger from *marr* (*mana*),
● 182 and that ritual visitation will follow if he does not pro-
461 pitiate the group concerned. On this account, and because he would suffer in prestige by failure to discharge these obligations, they are not incurred lightly. This was brought home to me vividly in Arnhem Land when Raiwälla of Mildjiŋi clan, a man who was with me for years, and who accompanied me everywhere, asked me not to take him with me when I was invited to ŋarra (*märdai'in*) ceremonies. He explained, in some distress, that because of his association with me, he had been invited to attend many more ŋ*arra* than would normally have been the case and was incurring thereby obligations to make *tadoit* payments (page 40) of food and *gerri* (material wealth) which he would not be able to discharge. Although the people knew that he was far from his own territory and understood his position, and although they assured him that he need not make any return presentations, he would not accept this. If he had done so he would not only have been in danger from *marr*, which had not been returned with the ceremonial presentation food or *gerri*, but he would have lost
182 face and been placed in a position of inferiority. The urge,
431 the "drive", furnished by these psychological attitudes in a
554 fully organised aboriginal society are more forceful than any
461 material urge. They far outweigh any desire to gain possessions and are the most important motive forces behind much of the hunting, and the organised and sustained work

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which goes on. But while these obligations impose a heavy 431
burden, especially upon a young man who must attend a 461
long series of ceremonies with a vista of payments to be met, 554
the ceremonies in turn confer some benefit upon him, [796]
although this may be indirect. They carry increased social [561]
status and prestige which in turn bring gradual liberation
from some of the irksome tabus which influence almost
every act of a young man.

Although on these occasions the immediate burden of 182
gathering vegetable food falls on his female relatives, 431
especially upon his mother and sisters, this does not relieve 461
the initiate of his own personal obligations, but rather 561
intensifies them. He must now redouble his efforts in [593]
hunting to enable him in turn to supply his women relations with fish, kangaroo, "sugar bag" or wild honey, in order to retain their goodwill. A man's success as a hunter depends not only on his ability to stalk and his skill with the spear but also on his capacity to make, and to maintain in serviceable condition, his hunting weapons, his fishing lines and nets and sometimes also a canoe. So initiation, especially initiation into the jealously-guarded clan totems (*märdai'in*) of the small groups which characterise the social organisation of North-eastern Arnhem Land, with their intense solidarity and quick resentment,[19] sets up a long train of social obligations—each with a definite economic import—each requiring gift and counter gift, and furnishing the motive for work, the urge for production both of food and *gerri*.

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[19] Just as generous presentations of *gerri* (material wealth) and [576]
ŋätu (food) promote goodwill, so tardiness in the discharge of these [628]
obligations may lead to avenging expeditions and interclan feuds.
A man who is unpopular, or who is notorious for his carelessness in [626]
these matters is more likely to be named as the victim when a
scapegoat is sought to avenge a death or wrong.

431 Payments or gifts such as those made by a young man under these conditions are known as *tadoit*, (*ta*, mouth, *doit*, signifying return, turn around, turn back), and they occur on many occasions apart from initiation, in each of which, however, the obligations are similar.

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784 Mourning and funeral rites among these people are extremely prolonged and are surrounded by many tabus and intricate patterns of obligatory conduct. The group which handles the bones of the dead, which may be carried for some years after they are removed from the ground soon after the initial burial, are called *ḳoŋ wuḳundi*, lit. "hands tabu", and these people are placed temporarily outside the normal social life of their hordes. Members of such groups, which stand in a special relation to society,
[182] remain in the camp, but they live apart, and this is stressed
[252] by the fact that they maintain separate fires at which they cook their own food, apart. But the tabu is not absolute and others within the camp will occasionally take something, such as a firebrand to start another fire, from this *wuḳundi* (tabu) place. If this should occur the people who
[431] take the fire will send back a small present of food in return. This again is called *tadoit* (*vide infra*). If they should omit to make this present they are in danger, after having eaten food cooked at the *wuḳundi* fire, because they have shared in the solidarity of a group, members of which are linked by the bond of their special relationship with the deceased and so are set apart temporarily from the normal social life of the horde.

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765
182 The bones of the dead are handled at intervals during the prolonged mortuary rites, and each time this occurs, the small group on whom falls the obligation of doing it, makes presentations called *ḳoŋ doit* and *ta doit*. The

first phrase means "return from hands", i.e. from handling 431
the bones, the second "return from mouth". Payments in 764
each case are made to the other near relatives. This is a 182
ritual act and may be interpreted as a token "payment" or
gesture in formal expiation of an infringement of the
solidarity (the *marr*) of a group, members of which are
bound together by the sharing of a special bond.

In the case of the ceremonial revelation of the jealously- 182
guarded sacred totemic objects of the clans, with their 431
intense solidarity, it was pointed out that the reciprocal 796
gifts required are substantial and exacting, and I have 778
shown that a considerable amount of organisation is
required to enable a man to discharge these obligations.

But it must be remembered that there is also another side
to these transactions to which reference has already been
made, and that a man not only gains greatly in prestige [554]
and social status, and increases the scope of the ceremonial
exchange cycle in which every individual of standing plays a
part, but above all, the *marr* or "spiritual power" from the
successful conduct of these reacts directly upon all his other
activities. It assists him in hunting and brings him "good [777]
luck" (*tjämbait*) and as has been stated, it adds to his prestige, his social status.

A graphic illustration of the belief in the spiritual power 777
which reposes in the sacred *räŋga*, occurred while I was 778
living with these people. Immediately after the revelation 796
of the *räŋga*, a ceremony associated with the sun totem
of a clan called Maräŋo, a young man went out turtle
hunting in his canoe, and returned with four turtles. The
old men credited the success of the expedition to "good
luck" (*tjämbait*) and claimed that the "body", really the
"skin" (*kälŋa*) of the young man was still covered with

777 the fine powdery dust (*ḳänno*),[20] of the ceremonial ground,
778 and declared that the turtles were therefore "*yarḳomirri*"
[796] (lit. "bearing a name", i.e. sacred). A rite was performed to
remove the tabu, before the flesh could be eaten by the
[431] uninitiated. Even then those people, other than members
of the totemic group, who ate the flesh, were called upon
to make a payment of the type previously described, called
tadoit, in this case to the fully initiated members.

● 182 Reference has been made to the obligation to hunt which
[461] a man incurs in order to provide animal food for the
431 women upon whom he must depend for the large quan-
[561] tities of food which he requires to meet the periodic
[796] ceremonial presentations which mark almost every stage
606 of initiation as well as the termination of each critical stage
604 in his life. This obligation is especially stressed in his
relationship with his *muḳul rumaro*[21] (potential mother-

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[20] *Känno* is really ash, fine, white, powdery wood ash. This man was said to be "*ḳälŋa ḳännomirri*", "skin with ashes", because the white dust of the ceremonial ground was still on his body and carried its *marr*.

[601] [21] As this paper may be read by many economists who may not have anthropological training, some reference to the kinship system of the aborigines may be of assistance. Under the system which is called "classificatory", the terms of relationship allied to the family and to near kin are extended to a number of people with whom no actual genetic relationship can be traced but who are grouped or classified with own kin. A man applies the term "father" not only to his own father but to all the people his father calls "brother" and this system is extended indefinitely. These terms expressing relationship are used instead of personal names, as terms of address. This system has the effect of reducing greatly the number of actual terms in use. But kinship terms are not mere names, for each carries with it a set pattern of behaviour. In Arnhem Land a man applies the term *muḳul rumaro* (mother-in-law) to the daughter of his mother's mother's brother. He knows that he may look to this woman to provide him with a wife or wives and the pattern of behaviour

in-law), and with the particular *ḳauwäl* (mother's 182
brother) who is the husband of this woman to whom he 431
[604]
applies the term *muḳul*. Before the potential mother-in-law 606
has a daughter, even before she is pregnant, he may begin
to send her gifts of food. These progressive gifts have a
cumulative effect and build up goodwill. They are divided
into two series, to each of which a special name is applied.
The first series are *milmarr*, while those given to the mother-
in-law after the birth of a daughter are known by a dif-
ferent term, *mundur*. As my informant said, "that is hard
work for me; she pays me back," i.e. by giving her daughter
to me in marriage. They believe that this special form of
giving has more than a "goodwill" effect, and that *marr*,
the spiritual force or power to which I have referred, goes
with the food, so that it has a greater significance than the
white man would attach to it—and much greater than its
mere value as food. The same applies to the special cere- 182
monial gifts of food and *gerri* which are presented by the 431
novitiate at various stages during his initiation to clan totems 561
626
and to other cults. Implicit in this form of giving is the 796
feeling which is even more important than "goodwill", that
it places the recipient under an obligation to repay. To [554]
remain under such a debt is to accept a feeling of inferiority,
of shame and humiliation.

In discussing the "drive", the urge to carry out the exact- 182
ing hard work (which in a fully organised aboriginal 431
461
society is everywhere in evidence) I have stressed the obli- 554
gation which a man feels to reciprocate with a gift of at 626

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toward *muḳul rumaro* is one of rigid avoidance. He may not speak to her nor she to him, but he has very definite obligations towards her (*muḳul rumaro*), including the obligation to provide her with certain animal food, with progressive gifts of a special type described above.

● 182 least equal, or if possible greater value, in order to maintain
431 his social status and to enhance his prestige. He achieves
461 554 this by his capacity to reciprocate a gift quickly and generously.
626 If he failed to meet the obligations imposed, for example by the kinship pattern, he would lose face, prestige, in his group. It will be evident that this feeling of shame and humiliation at failure to reciprocate a gift or to honour an obligation, apart altogether from any danger of incurring resentment and visitation by evil magic, furnishes one of the most powerful mechanisms which underlie the production of food and goods, and the circulation of these. This is well shown by an example given to me by my informants, which illustrates the use which can be made of this fact
262 to gain a desired objective. While a boy is still regarded as
562 a child, there is no tabu even for his sisters upon eating the
784 food that he may capture. But immediately after the circumcision ceremony, when his social status is altered and he lives apart from his mother and father in the single men's camp, the food collected or killed by a boy becomes tabu to relations of certain orders, and is now known by a special name, *k̥älŋboi* (*vide* page 21).

262 The eating of all *k̥älŋboi* food is surrounded by tabus,
431 784 even for those relatives who are permitted to partake of it at
606 all. For "outside" or "distant" relatives under the kinship system
584 to eat this *k̥älŋboi* food is a special privilege, but the obligation to make ceremonial return payments, again of the type called *tadoit*, is always present. *K̥älŋboi* food may sometimes be used to ingratiate a young man with a woman who stands in the relationship of potential mother-in-law (*muk̥ul rumaro*) to him, but whose daughter has already been promised (*wawun*) to another man some distance away. At first the *muk̥ul rumaro* may refuse the *k̥älŋboi* food, but under coercion she may at length accept it, and

if she does so, is regarded as having compromised herself 262
into giving her daughter to the youth whose *ḳälŋboi* food 431
she has eaten, although she knows that a fight must follow 784
when the man to whom the girl rightfully belongs learns 584
what has happened. Having accepted the *ḳälŋboi* food the 606
woman also makes a ceremonial presentation of food which
she gives to her *ḳorrọŋ* (son-in-law), who however does not
eat it himself but distributes it to certain other relatives,
defined by custom.

This example will show the strength of the urge to recip- 182
rocate, to discharge an obligation, and the extent to which 183
it dominates the behaviour of these people, as well as its 431
importance as a driving force in social and in economic 461
activities, in which it furnishes one of the most important
incentives to work.

ship" called *wäḳḳälmändji*[27] exists. Here again this right [421]
to use the property of a *mari* (always a distant or "outside" 602
mari under the kinship system) is part of the pattern of extreme licence in behaviour which is permitted or even obligatory between certain men who stand in the relationship of *mari* ⇌ *ḳutara* to one another. The behaviour in this case emphasises the fact that this is a very special and unusual relationship and one which contrasts with the normal pattern of behaviour, of which it is a complete reversal. Towards my own *mari*, my own mother's mother's brother, the man whose daughter's daughter I may marry—whose actual daughter, my *muḳul rumaro* (mother-in-law), is tabu, and to whom I must behave with greater reserve than to any other person in my kinship pattern—to this man I act with great circumspection and austerity. This is in marked contrast with the behaviour towards the *mari* whom I call *wäḳḳälmändji*, and whose *gerri* I may borrow.

This behaviour again serves to stress the fact that although 421
material possessions among these people are simple 602
and relatively few, the question of individual ownership of property and the right to dispose of this, is never in question, but is actually stressed in the kinship system, which defines and regulates conduct.

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[27] The "joking relationship", which serves to stress and to give [182]
point and contrast to, the behaviour between relatives in which the [171]
pattern is very restrained and austere, often takes the form of organised licence with exchange of obscene jokes and taunts which under other circumstances would lead inevitably to a fight, is a feature of the social organisation in many parts of Australia although there is little reference to it in the accounts of kinship which have been published.

See Donald F. Thomson, *The Joking Relationship and Organised* [113]
Obscenity in North Queensland, American Anthropologist, Vol. 37, No. 3, July-September, 1935.

5.

THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE IN ARNHEM LAND

When a newcomer in Arnhem Land settles down among 184
the people, he quickly becomes familiar with the material 181
culture and technology and is struck by the localised and
restricted nature of the distribution of certain elements and
minor traits and even of technological materials, and by the
extreme conservatism of the people.

In the case of certain elements—in particular, the *mintji*, 184
the magnificent patterns in polychrome, the totemic designs 424
which are the hereditary property, the "copyright", of a 614
group called by these people, *barpuro*, (a clan or an aggregation
of clans, linked by the possession of common totemic
ancestors)—this is understandable. Anything, whether social [578
or material, which touches the solidarity of these closely-integrated 628]
groups, is jealously guarded, and its infringement
bitterly resented and quickly avenged.[31] So that prudence,
as well as conservatism, plays a part in restricting

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[31] Sometimes this may be averted by expiatory or conciliatory [431
payments of food or *gerri* to appease the injured or offended sentiments 182]
of the individual or group, which serve to restore a state of
euphoria or ritual goodwill. But these presentations are invariably
carried out in a ritual or ceremonial manner which gives them
the stamp of formal approval of the society acting as a group and
so lifts them above the level of mere personal or private feuds.

192 instances, actually give their names to them[38]). (See map
431 No. 2.) A man who has relatives (*gurruto*) in groups in
577 one direction (*kumur*) draws from that quarter, in the form of gifts, *gerri* (valuables), which he has an obligation to pass to relatives or friends in another group in the appropriate *kumur*. Although he received many presents, much *gerri*, in the course of each year, he does not hold these things for long but acts merely as a temporary custodian, a clearing house, and passes them on to satisfy the incessant demand for *wetj* (page 78), and to maintain his status and prestige in the *kumuryänna märnda* relationship of the ceremonial exchange cycle.

431 Certain types of *gerri* are characteristic of each of these *kumur* and the receipt of a gift from one direction sets up an obligation to reciprocate with *gerri* from another. So a series of obligations, each with its counter obligation, forms the mechanism by which *gerri* are passed for hundreds of miles, *always away from the direction in which they originated.*

182 This ceremonial exchange provides the basis for a great
431 cultural movement that has for its motive force the all-powerful "drive" rather than the obligations of mere economic exchange, which although an important accompaniment, is subservient to the ceremonial aspect. It is this

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[38] *Kumur djalk*, applied to the people to the south and to *gerri* from that quarter (*kumur*), takes its name from *djalk*, the paper-bark sheath of *ŋämbi lirra*, the most characteristic and important object derived from this quarter in the exchange system. *Kumur muadäk* is named from *muadäk*, the collective term for the calico, wool and associated material which was introduced by the Macassar voyagers from this (northern) quarter and which, under the established system, passes to the south to *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin* to satisfy the obligation for reciprocal gifts in return for *ŋämbi*, boomerangs and other characteristic *gerri*.

It is this
ceremonial exchange cycle, and the rule that *gerri* from one direction pass to the opposite quarter, e.g. from *ḳumur ḳätjirḳ* and *ḳumur ḳärin* to *ḳumur miwait*, which provides the means by which such objects as boomerangs (*ḳälli-gälli*), a conspicuous foreign element in the area, have come from a region hundreds of miles away. It provides the motive force by which bundles of stone spear heads, (*lirra ŋämbi*), have come north from the far-famed quarry at *ŋillipidji*, and dispersed throughout the territory. There is, however, some flexibility in this arrangement for it is obvious that a man who receives a ceremonial present from a partner may pass it to one of a number of people situated in a fairly wide geographical range. The natives refer to the routes along which *gerri* are passed as *duḳarr*, paths, or roads[37] because these have become fixed fairly definitely by tradition. Objects of a certain type, such as boomerangs, although they are not manufactured in Arnhem Land but originate far to the south or south-west, may come by a south-western route along the Katherine River; from the south, up the Wilton by way of the Raimbaräŋa, a tribe of the interior, or they may come from the same source by a more easterly route via the Ritar'ŋo and Wagilläk clans, who, like the Raimbaräŋa, are interior people and are great rovers. (See map No. 2.)

431
[182]
[177]
[192]
[439]

This means that of a number of boomerangs manufac-

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439
[171
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[37] The use of the term "road" for these routes along which objects passed within these ceremonial exchange systems, seems to have been general in Australia and Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown has furnished the following note from his experience of Western Australia:

"The way in which objects pass continuously in one direction (which the W.A. natives call a 'road') is illustrated by the presence of pearl-shell from the Kimberley District among the tribes of the Great Australian Bight."

ḵumur märnda exchange, gave me the following list of 431
gerri which he received from each of the five quarters or 439
ḵumur[28] which form the horizon of his exchange cycle.

(1) *Kumur miwait,* (east). *Kaiyit*[29] (iron headed spears) [411
and the round black pounding stones used throughout 412]
Arnhem Land, especially for pulverising *ŋätu,* (*Cycas* fruit). This stone, which comes from the English Company's Islands, is called *poipuro* by groups as widely separated linguistically as Kopapoiŋo (and the allied Tjämbarpoiŋo) on the one hand, and Mildjiŋi on the other. Sometimes *ŋämbi lirra* (flint spear heads), which form the most characteristic of the *gerri* from *ḵumur djalḵ,* to which they give their name, may, as has been indicated above, reach a man in North Central Arnhem Land (e.g. a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the Lower Glyde River) by an easterly route via the roving Ritar'ŋo people, thence along the southern side of Buckingham Bay.

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[28] Mildjiŋi use the same name for these groups, but the actual [192]
word *ḵumur* (sternum) becomes *biri* in this language.

[29] The natives of Caledon, Trial and Blue Mud Bays, on the [325]
Gulf of Carpentaria, have acquired much skill in the making of *ḵaiyit,* and the manufacture of fine spear heads has become almost an industry at Trial Bay. Even before I actually entered Arnhem Land I had been surprised to obtain on the Roper River, iron headed (so-called "shovel") spears from Woodah Island, Blue Mud Bay. I found it difficult to understand why iron spear heads should be passing down to the Roper from Blue Mud Bay, where there was no white settlement, where contacts even by sea were few, and iron relatively scarce and highly valued, into country where cattle stations had long been established and where iron was relatively
easy to get. But the explanation of this was found later, in the 182
discovery in Northern Arnhem Land of the existence of the cere- 177
monial exchange cycle, which supplies the motive force for the 431
great movements of *gerri* over distances of hundreds of miles, of 439
which this is a part, and to which impetus was given by the coming

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431 (2) *Kumur muadäk* comprises calico, tobacco, blankets, [177 glass (the latter used for scrapers and highly valued in the 437] making of spears and other weapons), tomahawks, knives, belts, smoking pipes and other *gerri* of the type which are said formerly to have been obtained from the Macassars. ● [182 To fill the demand for *wetj* (page 78), and under the incessant 554] obligations of the ceremonial exchange system, these *gerri* are passed quickly to the southward—not so much under the urge for economic barter, as to fulfil obligations set up by the ceremonial exchange cycle and to gain the prestige, which the ability to send *gerri* of this order confers on the sender. For, while it will be seen that this fulfils a definite economic function, its basis is primarily ceremonial.

(3) *Kumur kätjirk*. A series of very characteristic *gerri*, some of which differ considerably from those made in

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[177]of the Macassar voyagers which brought iron to Arnhem Land long [182]before, it was known in what later became the settled country of 431 the Roper River.

439 The most interesting feature of this southern movement of spears is the fact that, today, when the position is reversed and when iron is relatively scarce and difficult to obtain in Arnhem Land in contrast with its abundance in the settled country of the Roper River valley, the passage of fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, which was developed under the impetus of the ceremonial exchange cycle, stimulated by the coming of the Macassar voyagers, still continues, although the practical need for it, the demand for iron spear heads for actual use in the Roper River area, must have passed, or at least must have been much reduced. The fact that the *economic* need which it served has passed, stresses once more the strength of the *ceremonial aspect* of the *kumur märndu* exchange cycle. [572]It must be remembered that partners within the ceremonial exchange cycle exist of such long standing that they have even become hereditary. These people send *gerri*, and these must be reciprocated with presents of the type long established by tradition, whether they seem appropriate or not.

from *ḵumur djalḵ*. But because of its known origin, a 431
ŋämbi lirra (flint spear head) is always known as *ḵumur* [572]
djalḵ, and for this reason it would not be appropriate for a man to the north to pass *ŋämbi lirra* as *wetj* to a partner in the south-east.

In order to understand the complicated system sur- 182
rounding the exchange of gifts and the sharing of food and 431
game it would be necessary to have not only a thorough 572
working knowledge of the kinship system and the obligations, unilateral and reciprocal, laid down by its terminology, but also to understand each of the special relationships which, in addition to those arising from kinship, may exist between members of the society. 602

To avoid further extending this account, I shall refer to 602
one only of these special relationships. This is *tjuḵarŋo*, 601
a term used reciprocally between individuals who stand in one of two relationships under the kinship system; *wawamändji*[41] (*wawa*, brother; *-mändji*, those two) or *marimändji*, i.e. *mari* ⇌ *ḵutara*, (mother's mother's brother ⇌ sister's daughter's son). Where these people stand in the relationship of brother they are usually half-brothers, the sons of women who are sisters, especially of sisters who have married men of clans on opposite sides of their own clan territories. Another factor is that often the relationship of *tjuḵarŋo* has existed between the mothers—who are not full or half-sisters—for it may exist between women as well as men. A man extends the same term also to brothers and sisters of his *tjuḵarŋo*.

Tjuḵarŋo is a very special relationship, the closest and most 602
permanent that can exist between men.

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[41] The suffix *-mändji* denotes mutual relationship together, i.e. *wawa-mändji*, brothers together; *wawa* is really elder brother but is used in this connection to express the relationship between brothers.

ŋäti ⇌ *käminyarr* (mother's father—daughter's son and daughter). 431 602

kauwal ⇌ *wäkku* (mother's brother—sister's son and daughter). [601]

duwe ⇌ *källai* (mother's brother's or father's sister's son and daughter).

mari ⇌ *kutara* (mother's mother's brother—sister's daughter's son and daughter).

wawa ⇌ *yukko yukko* (elder brother—younger brother).

bapa n'ymokunin ⇌ *katu* (father's younger brother—son and daughter).

maralkor ⇌ *karroŋ* (mother's mother's brother's son—father's sister's daughter's son and daughter).

People who stand in the *kumur märnda* relationship are regarded as partners facing one another in the exchange system, and each has the obligation to give gifts of the appropriate order. Each strives to pass to the other, his partner in the *kumur mändji* relationship, gifts of the kind appropriate to the *kumur* in which he stands, and the partner in turn must reciprocate, though not necessarily immediately. This exchange is not in any sense barter although circulation of goods on a large scale results. Its primary object, to the native, is not merely to gain goods, for to these people the ceremonial aspect is the important one. As my informant said: "Meaning, to give all the time—*kumur märnda ŋällinya* (partners together, we two)—all the time, till die". i.e. the objective of each is to give in order to maintain and affirm the bond between each *kumur* pair, until they die, when their children carry it on. If two men die who are *kumuryanna märnda*, their wives may take over the relationship, and carry on the ritual exchange. The importance of the *ceremonial* aspect, and the fact that this relationship is

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577 *miwait*, I asked him if he did not make these *mindjalpi*
431 himself. He replied "I make them, but different country—
602 he must give me *wetj*—like this" (holding his hand out). "If you give me, I can't say 'I don't want it' because this arm belong him goes this way—it points along me. *Marr* (goodwill, spiritual power) goes this way, I must take it.
) *Wetj* is like *marr*."

● 182 But if it is the sociological bond, the *kumuryanna märnda*
431 relationship, which is so much stressed by the natives, this
435 ceremonial exchange has also an economic side which is no less important than the ritual, and which accompanies it, taking advantage of the motive force and the mechanism and driving force of the more obvious ceremonial exchange. Under cover of the great ceremonial exchange system, of which an outline only has been given, large quantities of *gerri* pass from one territory to another, and although in some cases, as with the *bäti* (basket) called *mindjalpi*, the actual article itself varies little if at all from a similar object of local manufacture, it has special value, *virtu*, by reason of the fact that it has been made in another country. This is particularly true of spears, which circulate freely throughout the area, and are valued often because they are believed to possess special merit derived from their place of origin—because they acquire a halo of glamour and romance by reason of the way in which they are acquired; because they have *marr*. And although the natives still retain "ordinary", (non-sacred) objects, this gives those acquired by ceremonial exchange a history, a background, a personality which lifts them above other *wäkkinŋu* objects and gives them a greatly enhanced value in the eyes of people who receive them.

182 Here then, is the nucleus of a great system of exchange,
431 which, though it differs in many respects from our own established ideas of trade or barter, supplies an incentive,

and above all a social and ceremonial background 182
to the aborigine, far more important than the mere 431
material gain of *gerri*. It furnishes him also with an in- [461]
centive to work and to lavish special skill on the making of objects of material culture, in order to discharge his obligations within the scope of this system, which no mere desire for economic gain, shorn of its ritual and pageantry, could achieve, however great the material reward.

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pounding stones called *poipuro* (page 71) it is exported 135 324
as *gerri* within the ceremonial exchange system. 431 463

It is part of my thesis to show that an important function 182
served by the ceremonial exchange cycle is in supplying 431
this incentive, this motive for fine craftsmanship, the an- 324
ticipation of the ritual and pageantry, by adding romance or 463
"glamour" to work which would otherwise be drudgery. A man does not as a rule set out to manufacture a stone axe as he may a fish spear or a hunting spear, to satisfy an immediate need. Such an implement requires hours, even days, of grinding and polishing after the preliminary rough shaping of the hard stone. But, as it has been pointed out, these axes are made by a craftsman who probably learned the craft from his father and are accumulated as *gerri* which will be presented on some future ceremonial occasion to "pay back" a present that the maker has received from one of his exchange partners, or they are used to create an obligation which his partner will later discharge.

The stone quarry at ŋillipidji where *ŋämbi lirra* are [135
made, covers acres of ground, and hundreds, perhaps thou- 316]
sands, of spear heads come from the quarry in the course of a year. Like the stone axe heads, these flint heads are not made for immediate use, but are passed from Wagilläk territory—in bundles of a dozen or so, each wrapped neatly in the paperbark sheath called *djalk*—to reciprocate ceremonial presents of *muadäk*, or to build up goodwill and prestige. Big bundles are sent north and north-west, in the knowledge that they will be reciprocated ultimately with other *gerri* of a traditional kind and of at least equivalent value.

From the orientation of a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the 182
Glyde River, the people to the north who occupy the terri- 431
tory along the northern shoreline, at Glyde Inlet, and Banyan 438

182 Island at the mouth of the Goyder River, are *ḳumur muadäḳ*,
431 and it is from his partners in this region within the
438 *ḳumur märnda* relationship or ceremonial exchange cycle,
and in former times from the Macassar people themselves, that a Mildjiŋi man looked, for all the articles of the class called *muadäḳ* and *mäthäḳäl*.

My informant, Raiwälla, of Mildjiŋi clan (of the middle Glyde River), speaking of the *ḳumur märnda* relationship, the circulation of *gerri*, and his place in the exchange system, said quite spontaneously:

"I make (*gerri*) come down from *diltji* (hills) and go down along sandbeach." i.e. "I, as 'middle man' gather *gerri* from the high hills—in this case from *ḳumur djalḳ* and *ḳumur ḳärin*—and send them down to the coast."

In the phrase quoted above, my informant expressed his attitude towards the exchange cycle and his understanding of the part it plays in the circulation of wealth. He sees himself, in his territory on the Glyde River, as the "middle man" between the people of the inland (to whom he is *ḳumur muadäḳ*), and the people of the coast (to whom he is *ḳumur ḳärin*). (See map 2 of Arnhem Land with diagram of ceremonial exchange cycle, prepared from standpoint of a Mildjiŋi clansman.) From the inland he obtains *gerri* such as *ŋämbi lirra* (flint spear heads), *ḳälli-gälli* (boomerangs), *ḳällämba* (forehead fillets), and many other items, and passes these on to his partners on the coast, from whom he obtains reciprocal presents, especially of the *gerri* called *muadäḳ*, which he, in turn, must pass inland again to *ḳumur ḳärin* and *ḳumur djalḳ*. For the people of Banyan Island, the mouth of the Goyder River, and Howard Island, most *gerri* of the *ḳumur djalḳ* horizon come by another route—along the Goyder River and the hinterland of Buckingham Bay. From the social standpoint the constant

FROM THE SOCIAL STANDPOINT THE CONSTANT
flow of ***muadäk*** from the Macassar visitors enabled a man 182
of this area to discharge his obligations to those from whom 431
he had received *gerri*, and to maintain and to build up his 439
prestige. From the economic point of view it had the effect [554]
of stimulating the circulation of *gerri*, of maintaining a balanced exchange of goods, under cover of what, to the natives, is the vastly more important social and ceremonial relationship.

The orientation of the ceremonial exchange system as it 177
still operates, with the emphasis on the "approved" or tra- 182
ditional *gerri* in each *kumur*, leaves no doubt as to the im- 431
petus which the coming of the Indonesians gave to the culture of this area. The people of the coast, who in former times came into direct contact with the Macassar visitors—and in more recent times, with trepang fishermen and casual seafarers—and who have provided the iron, nails, and bottles (for glass scrapers, etc.) for their exchange partners, are named from the special *gerri*, known collectively as *muadäk*, which they send as reciprocal gifts to their partners in the south.

It is not proposed to deal at length with the ceremonial aspect of this infiltration, and a single reference will suffice to show the effect on ceremonial life, which gives weight to the data which has been recorded, and of the value placed upon the *gerri* which were brought by the Macassar seafarers, as well as the effect of this on economic and social life.

The Mildjiŋi clan of the Glyde River has not only come 177
strongly under the influence of these Indonesian people, 431
but among other traits, has adopted a square-faced bottle, 532
called *butulo*, and has elevated it to the level of a clan totem. 778
Today the *mälli*, the representation, "the shade", the non-material representation or effigy of this bottle, is carved laboriously from solid ironwood, and is painted with a

It is probable that under ordinary conditions, if the cir- 182
culation of these axes depended on straight-out exchange 431
or barter, their value to the seafaring peoples of the north 577
and east coasts of Arnhem Land, for the cutting of dugout 438
canoes, would have been such that the people would have parted with them reluctantly. But under the ceremonial exchange system, and the compelling need to build up goodwill and to increase their prestige by the circulation of *gerri*, and especially to make reciprocal gifts for those already received, the people on the sea coast, who received these axes first, must have been compelled to pass many of them rapidly southward to partners in *ḳumur djalḳ* and *ḳumur ḳärin*. Of this circulation of *gerri* an informant remarked—"I must make road there". It is significant that he used the words "must" and "road". The word "road" my informant translated first as *ḳumur*, then as *ḳumur duḳarr*—conceiving the movement of *gerri* as so regular and extensive as to make a beaten path or "road", *duḳarr*, a conception to which reference was made on page 69 above.

But again it must be remembered that the *social* obligations of the ceremonial exchange cycle, which to the natives are the obvious and vitally important ones, far outweigh the economic exchange which accompanies it, and sometimes persist after the actual need for its *gerri* has passed, as in the case of the iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay which were passing down to the Roper River long after this area had become settled.

There is little doubt that a ceremonial exchange system 177
existed in Arnhem Land before the coming of the visitors 431
from Indonesia and it is not intended to suggest that the exchange system in this territory depends on the coming of these seafaring visitors. But its orientation at the present time, and its most important "drives" certainly owe much

177 to the impact of Indonesian culture. The giving and
431 exchange of gifts, of *gerri*, is an important accompaniment
[602] of much of the ritual that takes place in Arnhem Land and
[182] is an integral part of the behaviour which is obligatory
between relatives of certain orders within the kinship
system. A number of special relationships, of which one,
tjukarŋo, is mentioned on page 75, are also characterised
by the exchange of possessions.

And again, the fact must be stressed that the ceremonial
431 exchange cycle is not merely a matter of exchange or barter,
577 although the economic exchange is a vital accompaniment,
but that a man having once established a place in the
kumur märnda relationship, must reciprocate with the
appropriate *gerri*. As one of my informants said (page 79),
"*Must* I give *wetj*"—"I *must* reciprocate." And again, when
he is offered a gift, a man cannot refuse it—he *must* accept
it—and after holding it for the period permitted by custom,
pass it on to one of his partners. When people of an inland
clan, who are partners in the *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin*
directions, brought big ceremonial presentations of flint spear
heads, boomerangs, forehead fillets (*källämba*) and large
ceremonial hair belts and other *gerri*, to their exchange partners in *kumur muadäk* the people would have no choice.
They would be obliged to accept the *gerri* brought by the
visitors and to reciprocate. The *gerri* appropriate to each
[183] quarter are defined by tradition, and again, it was stated that
tradition lays down the rule that *gerri* from one *kumur* may
[182] not return to the quarter in which they originated. The
[433] practical effect of this custom would be to make it difficult
for the people of the coast to have a monopoly of iron implements, such as axes, knives, iron spear heads, wire for
fish spears, even if they wished to do so. It would be impossible for them to possess these without the knowledge

of their immediate neighbours who could solicit such *gerri* 182 431
by themselves making substantial ceremonial presentations, 433
requiring appropriate return gifts. 577

The social implication of the *kumur märnda* relationship 177
is such that if the inland people maintain a constant stream 182
of *gerri* to their neighbours to the north, these must be 431 577
reciprocated, with resultant increase in the volume and tempo of the exchange cycle. It will be evident that under this system it would be impossible for any man to accumulate, or to hold permanently, much *gerri*. To do so would mean to default in his obligations to exchange partners. He would lose prestige and social status. His social personality would suffer, which, to these people, would far outweigh the value of the possessions. The functional importance of the exchange system and the vital part it plays in the social and ceremonial life of the people of Arnhem Land, as well as the stimulus which it must have received through the coming of the Macassar visitors, is evident. The Macassar influence is important not merely as a source of the greatly valued *müadäk*, but also for the incentive which this gave to the inland groups to send up *gerri* to *kumur muadäk*, which they knew must be reciprocated with the articles which they valued, and which were most important to their own social life and economy. And by no means the least im- [619]
portant feature of the ceremonial exchange cycle was the part it played in overcoming the effect of the segmentary organisation, which would tend normally to restrict communication, a fact to which reference has already been made.

The facts which have been presented, although they deal 177
with one relationship only, will suffice to show that the 182
influence of the Macassar visitors on the economic life and 431
ceremonial exchange cycle of the natives of Arnhem Land

177 was an important one. It supplied the "drive" for the
●182 extensive exchange system which was in part ceremonial,
431 and it furnished the mechanism and the dynamic force under cover of which *gerri* were sent south to discharge obligations set up by receipt of a steady flow of gifts, and so to stimulate reciprocal presentations by creating obligations which must be fulfilled.

Important as were the contributions made by the Indonesian visitors in actual material objects, such as iron for knives and fish hooks, wooden *lippa lippa* and the axes with which to cut canoes and so to augment food supply, their most important contribution was social—in the dynamic effect these things exercised on the social and ceremonial life under cover of which the important, but less obtrusive, economic exchange system has been developed.

ordinary men, in about the same proportion as we do. However, no matter 000
how much we like natives and their culture, there is always a tendency to assume an ethnic superiority and to look upon a "primitive" man as "just like a child." This assumed mental superiority is part of our thinking and difficult to dislodge.

A "council" of the important old men had gathered under a large 623
tamarind tree on the border of the totem grounds (page 31). Mahkarolla, [159]
as one of the older and more important men of the Murngin, had a place 628
in the circle. [I was also present.] The members of this council were discussing the perplexities of the great war in which their various clans were involved. A few months before there had been complete quiet. In the whole of northern Arnhem Land there had been peace. All the old blood feuds were quiet and inactive. The great ceremony to celebrate the recognition of Yurlunggur, the python god, had started. Leaders from the upper reaches of the Roper River had come down to the coastal plains of the Arafura Sea for this great fertility rite.

One night two young men, against the wishes of their elders, killed a boy and wounded another who belonged to clans that had been their traditional enemies. In the early morning the bush people gathered their belongings and hurried back to their own country. The younger men of all the clans of the Murngin and the other tribes made new spears and tested their spear-throwers in preparation for trouble. War started. The ceremonies ceased. Many battles were fought and many people were killed (pages 172-174).

The ceremony which had been interrupted was a fertility rite. Without 796
this celebration to help nature perform her many functions, the animals 182
would not multiply, the grass would not grow, and the seasons of the year 628
would lose their symmetry. The absolute necessity for the celebration of this ritual was felt by all the men who had accepted the responsibilities of Murngin society.

The council had met, therefore, to find ways of stopping the war and of 623
bringing peace to all the clans of the black world as they knew it. The war 628
must be stopped if life were to continue.

The causes of the war were considered in the effort to find a solution which would bring peace to the people. The reasons for the failure of the peace-making ceremonies were considered. Blame was attached to various individuals. The old men criticized especially the hot-headedness of their youths, with slightly more emotion expressed when they spoke of the misdeeds of their enemies' young men.

After several hours of talk consensus was reached. It was felt that the warlike peoples of the bush were really responsible for the trouble. It was

CHAPTER EIGHT

Family Life in the Jungle

A FAMILY is the most important unit in aboriginal society, 614
and the horde is founded on it. Some families have as few 621
as three members; the largest I saw was that in which Wonggu had twenty-six wives and fifty children. A horde consists of a father's family and his sons' families, and if a few generations of sons escape their enemies' spears the horde is a large one. Upon this simple horde-family relationship depends the entire intricate, bewildering, and far-reaching aboriginal social organization.

Polygamy is an ancient custom and has an economic 595
basis, for women are the chief food-gatherers and are 182
coveted as assets and never regarded as expensive luxuries. A man cannot foresee the number of wives he is to have, but he hopes for several, and as his influence increases there is a tendency to bestow women on him. Bestowal of women is so arranged that old men obtain young wives and young men generally receive old widows, and incongruous as the arrangement may seem to us it ensures that old men have
active women to hunt for them and their elderly wives, and [587]
that the young men, well able to look after themselves, make
do with elderly widows. Prestige lies with the old men, and [554]
they enforce the practice despite constant objections from [888]
both the young men and the young women. As youths grow older their authority increases and they in turn bargain for young women.

Women live a much harder life than men, and are 888
neglected and unwanted as they grow old before their time; 562